

Sant Dnyaneshwar Shikshan Sanstha's

**HON.SHRI.ANNASAHEB DANGE ARTS,  
COMMERCE AND SCIENCE COLLEGE,  
HATKANANGALE, DIST-KOLHAPUR 416109  
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## ECOCONSCIOUSNESS IN SELECT INDIAN ENGLISH POETRY

Mr. Sanjay R. Mane

Y.C. Arts and Commerce College, Bampur.

The term "ecocriticism" was coined in 1978 by William Rueckert in his essay "Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism". He underlines the urgency of balance in the interaction between human and nature. Ecocriticism is defined as "the study of relation between literature and physical environment" by Cheryl Glotfelty and Harold Fromm in the ecocriticism reader. Lawrence Buell identifies two phases of ecocriticism: The first wave ecocriticism and the second wave ecocriticism or the "revisionist ecocriticism". In the first wave the ecocritics focused on such genre as nature writing, nature poetry and wilderness fiction. In the second wave ecocritics inclined towards environmental injustice as a "social ecocriticism" that takes degraded landscapes just as seriously as the "natural landscape". The English Romantics were the first full fledged ecological writers in the Western literary tradition. Karl Kroeber describes the Romantics as "proto-ecological" thinkers (5, 155). This strain is also visible in Indian English literature. The writers before and after independence have expressed their views regarding eco-consciousness in their work. Rabindranath Tagore, Toru Datta, Sarojini Naidu, A.K. Ramasujan and Gieve Patel etc. have treated nature and environment very realistically and focused on the need to keep balance between nature and human. According to Peter Barry, an eco-critic might study a text from different perspectives, but his major concern is "to reread major literary works from an eco-centric perspective, with particular attention to the non-existence of the natural world" (120). This is thoroughly true with Indian writers, that is why Rabindranath Tagore's poetry point out the human interaction with Nature. Drawing from the Upanishadic tradition, Tagore saw the presence of the Divine spirit within all creation manifested within the richness of Nature. This presence was one which was marked by a deep spirit of creative joy whose reflection Rabindranath sought to create within his poetry. Tagore's poetry is permeated with every seasonal hue, propelled with the flora and the fauna reflecting all possible moods.

Tagore constantly extolled the beauty and splendour of nature. In his nature poetry a bird's notes is never missed and the stream's babbling finds its full wisdom. Tagore constantly longs for spiritual companionship with nature and to be identical with it. These themes are vivid in his poems such as *Gitanjali*. *The evening air is eager with the sad music of water / An, it calls me out into the dusk*. And *Stray Birds: My heart, with its lapping waves of song, longs to cross the green world of the sunny south* (Tagore 1916). The intimate relationship between nature with its colours, sounds and odours and with the poet with infinite joy and delight (Mondal, Tagore) in his poems narrates, my heart dances like a peacock and in *Stray Birds* states, [my heart] beats her waves at the shore of the world and writes upon it, "I love thee". Marking its spiritual dimension, Tagore portrays nature as the most sacred plane for pilgrimages and leads to an expansion of consciousness.

Toru Datta's poem "The mango tree" is the best of all her nature poems. "It is more than the port of arrival of a day's wanderer, it is memory, it is recapturing the past, immortalizing the moments of time so recaptured, the tree is both tree and wanderer and [in] it, she indicated both time and eternity" (Kumar 132). This poem is full of varied ecological details in which Datta reminisces nostalgically about her childhood memories associated with the *Cassia* tree in her family plot. The tree has been personified here which is shown to be embraced by a creeper just like a "huge p. ... winding round and round the rugged trunk, indented deep with scars up to its very summit near the stars" (line 21) there is an image of a baboon watching the sunrise and its tiny offsprings leaping and playing on lower boughs of the tree reinforces the theme of ecological life. "The baboon has been man's ancestor, suggesting the primacy of man" (Ruxhayar 4).

Toru Datta's poem "Baughmaree" is a sonnet which describes the poet's garden surrounding her Calcutta house in a picturesque manner. With its vivid and picturesque description of nature, it can be compared with Keats's "Ode to Autumn" with its season of mists and mellow fruitfulness. The poem opens with the description of the endless green that glides around our garden. It showcases the seasonal beauty of the garden Baughmaree, which with its openness and lushness, "with its several trees and thick foliage, [is] a veritable garden of Eden where one might "bask and gaze" on its several beauties" (Kumar 135). The poem has sensual beauty like Keats. The image of the garden as described in "Ode to Autumn" "Horn of Plenty" "a flock of domestic" "and green-wough sets by a meadow between nature and culture".

Sarojini Naidu is the best of all the poets of the inherent aesthetic sense of nature. The colourful and landscape with its "carmine-pink petals", "Bamboo-boughs", "lily buds, wassa-wassa, and country of tomorrow" with its wild forest and a variety of animals and birds "water by gorges", rivers and hills thrill her with ecstatic delights. "The radiant radiance of beauty is a joy forever" just like "The Dawn" she delights in nature and seems to be inspired by the sights and sounds of her immediate surroundings around her.

"She has a keen sense of observation and her fine sensibility responds more emotionally than intellectually to the sense impressions from nature" (Nair 99). The element of escapism also find place in her poetry. The poem "Village Song" is best eg of this. "The girl child in the poem seems to be disgusted by the false shows and boastful claims, the fever and fret of life" around her and "finds peace and joys in the sanctuary of Nature" (Kumar 98). Sarojini Naidu's another poem "Summer Woods" also strikes the same note of escapism in the poem, the persona has not only become "tired of painted roofs and soft and silken floors" and "sick of strife and song and festivals and fame" but she also longs "for wind-blown canopies of crimson guimohars!" and "to fly where cassia-woods are breaking into flame". The whole poem gives us a vivid picture of various ecological aspects of nature such as trees (like cassia-woods, tamarind, moisart, neem and banyan), flowers (like crimson guimohars, jasmine and water-lily), animals (like serpent kings and golden panthers) and birds (like koels) and of pools and rivers as in the following lines, "And roam at fall of eventide along the river's brink/And bathe in water-lily pools where golden panthers drink". According to M.K. Naik "Like the Romantics, Naidu regarded Nature as a refuge from the cares of human life though she is no Nature mystic, unlike Wordsworth nor does she subscribe to the Keatsian sensuous apprehension of Nature. But she does evoke the tropical magnificence of the opulent Indian landscape" (22).

Ramanujan has a special attachment for tree. His concern for protection of environment is seen in 'Leaky tap After a Sister's Wedding'. He can imagine a pain caused to the tree. He says, It is a single summer woodpecker/peck-peck-peck pecking away/at that tree/ behind the kitchen. My sister and I always wished a tree/could shriek or at least writhe/like that other shriek we saw/under the beak of the crow. In "Ecology" the poet gives an account of three red Champak trees, when they bloom into flowers, they cause allergy to his mother. The poet wants to cut down those trees but his mother refuses on the ground that they are seeded by passing birds to give her gods and her daughters and grand children basketful of annual flowers. Like trees, Ramanujan also writes on flowers, mountain, animals, birds and insects. In "The Strider", the poet describes the motion, the habit and the physiognomy of the insect. He describes the eye, and legs of the insect. Its thin limbs and enormous luminescent eyes are common physical feature of the rogis.

Gieve Patel's 'On Killing a Tree' is an ecological poem about man's indiscriminate destruction of trees. The poem highlights a lot of morals. Firstly, it displays the destructive nature of humans. Secondly, it shows that Mother Nature is inevitable and cannot be easily destroyed. Thirdly, the tree is a symbol of mankind.

The poem begins ironically, describing the crime committed by the tree. For years it has consumed the earth's crust. Like a thief it has absorbed sunlight, air and water and has grown up like a giant. So the tree must be killed. But it is not an easy task. A simple jab of the knife will not do. From close to the ground it will rise up again and grow to its former size. It will again become a threat to man. So the tree should be tied with a rope and pulled out entirely. Its white, bleeding root should be exposed. Then it should be browned and hardened and twisted and withered and it is done. The poem gives a realistic picture of man's attitude towards trees. The tree is his greatest friend. But man is so foolish that he doesn't realize, the fact that he is cutting his own throat when he cuts a tree.

Writers like Rabindranath Tagore, Toru Datto, Sarojini Naidu, A.K. Ramanujan and Gieve Patel have treated nature and environment very realistically and focused on the need to keep balance between nature and human. Tagore saw the presence of the Divine Spirit within all creation manifested within the richness of Nature. The poetry of Toru Datto has sensuous beauty, while Sarojini Naidu finds peace and joys in the sanctuary of Nature, Ramanujan is protector of environment and Gieve Patel shows that Mother Nature is inevitable and cannot be easily destroyed.

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