

# Introduction

Well-known critic Matthew Arnold says ‘literature is criticism of life.’ Life of human being and other species depends upon nature and natural resources. So nature and literature having intimate relationship goes hand in hand. All types of literature, all over the world, reflect nature. Nature provides us essentials like clean water, food medicines even recreational retreats. Being a part of nature human depends upon healthy ecosystem for survival. It has become very much important to study ecology because it helps to understand nature and how it works. It also provides evidence on the interdependence between the natural world and people.

Today ecology is defined as the way in which plants, animals and people are reflected to each other and their environment. Everything is interconnected. There are cycles in nature. Each cycle influence other cycle. All of nature has utility. All is important. If humans interfere in cycles it adversely affects harmony of ecosystems. India is gifted with diverse ecosystems. Literature reflects everything happening around us. Nature and its power, beauty are integral parts of literature. Nowadays ecologically informed critical studies have been growing in large numbers. It signals necessity to develop an ecological or environmental criticism in the profession of the humanities, as well as to bring ecological consciousness to the practice of literary criticism.

Literary ecology is a projection of human ideas about human responsibility into the natural important. Nature is origin of all sciences. Any branch of science can't be studied without study of natural elements. Literary field is also not exception. Literary ecology has got more importance. Ecocriticism is a new critical movement that attempts to link literary criticism and theory with today's ecological issues. It studies the relationship between literature and the science of ecology by applying ecological concepts to literature. Ecocriticism focuses on the literary analysis of the representations of

nature in literary texts and the literary constructions of the environmental crisis in eco-literary discourses.

At present ecocriticism is in full swing. Global environmental crisis has made critic to study literature from ecocritical perspective and to explore constructions of environment in literary texts. Ecocriticism explores the ways in which we imagine and portray the relationship between humans and the environment in all areas of cultural production.

Greg Garrard defines ‘ecocriticism is the study of the relationship of the human and non-human, throughout human cultural history and entailing critical analysis of the term ‘human’ itself.’ Present human interference with the non-human world is excessive, and the situation is rapidly worsening.

Most ecological work shares common motivation that is the awareness that we have reached the age of environmental limits a time when the consequences of human actions are damaging the planet’s basic life supporting system. Ecocritics encourage others to think seriously about the aesthetic and ethical dilemmas posed by global environmental crisis. Literature denotes writers approach towards environment and the way he describes nature.

Literature is multidimensional. Post modern fiction incorporates the cultural, social, political and ecological themes. Many writers have commented on both life and art in their fictions. They highlight fragmentary and decentered nature of human reality. Yet their fictions transcend the duality separating art and reality. Ecocriticism attempts to transcend the duality of art and life, human and natural and to work along the principles of interconnections between them. Ecocriticism offers a unique fusion of literary, scientific, ecological and philosophical. It seeks to redirect humanistic ideology, not spurning the natural sciences but using their ideas to sustain viable readings. Literature and science trace their roots to the hermeneutics of religion and law. Literary ecology inquires into the ways in which nature is marginalized, silenced or pushed into a hazy backdrop against which the rational human struts upon.

The task of ecocriticism is to formulate a conceptual foundation for the study of interconnectedness between literature and environment. Ecocritics examine human perception of wilderness, and how it has changed throughout history and whether or not current environmental issues are accurately represented or even mentioned in popular culture and modern literature.

Ecocriticism aims to bring a transformation of literary studies by linking literary criticism and theory with the ecological issues at large. It launches a call to literature to connect to issues of today's environmental crisis.

Kiran Desai has used Indian as well as foreign nature and landscapes as setting to her both novels. Her first novel is '*Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*' [1996]. Its setting is Shakot in Punjab and its orchard. She depicts various scenes of nature and landscapes of Shahkot and orchard. In her second novel '*The Inheritance of Loss*' [2006] she depicts north-eastern Himalaya and its rich flora and fauna with its bounty and beauty through Kanchenjunga, a peak always covered with ice.

Ecocritical evaluation of these novels may be helpful to study

- 1] Textualization of nature and landscapes in the novel
- 2] Relationship of man with nature and their interconnectedness.
- 3] Appreciation of beauty of nature and landscape
- 4] Changing role and responsibilities of human beings towards nature

### **Ecocritical Element in Indian English Fiction**

Creative writing in Indian language is extremely vast and complex reflecting not only the Indian culture in its broad feature but also the several regional and sub-regional aspects. Contemporary Indian culture is extremely complex and fascinating on account of the peculiar amalgam of tradition and modernity as well as the multiplicity of sub-cultures and languages.

In the history of Indian English women writers Toru Dutt is considered to be first woman writer who portrays beautiful nature in her poem '*Our Casuarina Tree*' which is considered to be one the of most beautiful poems. Kamala Markandaya's novel '*Nectar in Sieve*' [1954] can be studied from ecocritical perspective. She pictures immense productivity of Mother Nature, the fruitfulness of trees, the melodies of singing birds and the blossoming of flowers. R.P. Jhabwala describes terrestrial nature and the nature on earth's surface in her novel '*Get Ready for Battle*' [1963]. Novels of R. K. Narayan are called as Malgudi novels or 'Spirit of Place'. He has portrayed scenes of nature and landscapes of Malgudi in his novels. The river Sarayu , the 'Mempi Hills', major landmarks, are beautifully described in his novel. Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* reflects ecological elements of Malabar Coast. The two most important landmarks in it are Himavathy river and the Tippur hill. In '*Cat and Shakespeare*' [1965] woman is compared with natural elements. "woman is earth, air, ether, sound : woman is microcosm stream....woman is the earth and cavalcade, the curve of the cloud and round roundedness of sun'. '*The Serpent and Rope*' [1960] is story of Rama's quest to reach the 'water' of self-realization by following 'the direct path' of renunciation, once he realizes the futility of wordly life. In the epigraph of novel individual souls are compared with waves in sea.

'Jivas like waves in sea came into being, rise and fall, fight against each other and die'

Anita Desai has used peacock as a symbol of love to show Maya's unfulfilled wish of love in '*Cry the Peacock*' [1963]. Maya had hallucinations or visions of lizards and birds copulating in weird setting. In another novel '*Village by Sea*' [1982] Anita Desai has used sea and seashore as beautiful background to story of Lila.

Another important novelist whose works reflect ecological references is Ruskin Bond. His works are influenced by life in the hill stations

at the foothills of the Himalaya where he spent his childhood. '*A Flight of Pigeons*' [1990] is about mutiny of 1857. These pigeons are nothing but British Kingdom. Amitav Ghosh's novel '*The Hungry Tide*' [2004] contains ecocritical elements. This shows relationship of man and nature, animal with each other. It describes Sundarbans and various islands. He describes beauty of nature and its harmful aspect also.

The novel '*The Binding vine*' [1993] by Shashi Deshpande contains ecocritical elements. The central symbolism in the novel is contained in the title. The central theme of the novel is 'binding vine' of feeling and emotions between parent and child and between husband and wife. Urmila is like an oak and the infant Amu is like a creeper around her. The daughter-mother relationship between Urmila and her mother Inni is expressed through the image of a plant by the novelist. Jai Nimbkar's '*Come Rain*' [1993] describes changed face of Sangampur due to increasing industries. This novel highlights one of the serious impact of industrial pollution in rural areas of India and its natural scenery. Gita Mehta's '*A River Sutra*' [1993] can be studied from ecocritical point of view. The novel has setting of banks of India's holiest river Narmada. Arundhati Roy's novel '*God of Small Things*' [1997] begins with scenes of nature and atmosphere in Ayemenem.

'May in Ayemenem is hot brooding month. The days are long and humid. The river shrinks and black crows gorge on bright mangoes in still, dustgreen trees. Red bananas ripen. Jackfruits burst. Dissolute bluebottles hum vacuously in fruity air'. [Roy,1]

This novel also can be studied through lens of ecocriticism. Arvind Adiga describes river Ganga, in his novel '*A White Tiger*' [2008] which won Booker prize, as mother Ganga, daughter of Vedas, river of illumination, protector of all us, breaker of chain of birth and rebirth. Arun Joshi's '*The City and River*' [1990] show ecology not only as a dominant theme but it shows relationship of man and nature. He compares two types of lives. Thus there are

so many Indian English novelist who wrote about nature and its various aspects, its bounty and beauty, its spiritual importance, destructive feature. There are so many novels which include ecological aspects and can be studied from ecological perspective.

Novels of Kiran Desai can be studied from ecocritical perspective. She has used various scenes of nature and landscapes as a background to the novels. Orchard is used as setting for first novel and north-eastern Himalayan mountain for second novel '*The Inheritance of Loss*'.

### **Kiran Desai as a Ecocritic**

Novels of Kiran Desai can be studied from the point of view of the different concepts of ecocriticism. Her two novels '*Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*' [1996], and '*The Inheritance of Loss*' [2006] show relationship between people and places. Kiran Desai has described nature and various landscapes of orchard and Himalaya Mountain in these two novels. Orchard provides suitable ecological background to the novel '*Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*, Kanchenjunga and Kalimpong are important locations where narrative of '*The Inheritance of Loss*' takes place. Nature in its beautiful form and its destructive aspects has been well delineated by novelist. Beautiful orchard, its soothing and serene beauty attracts protagonist of *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*. Both novels can be studied from ecocritical perspective

### **Life and Career of Kiran Desai**

Kiran Desai, born on 3<sup>rd</sup> Sept 1971 in New Delhi, is an Indian author who is citizen of India and permanent resident of the United States. She lived in New Delhi until she was 10. She left India at 14, and she and her mother then lived in England for a year and then moved to the United States, where she studied creative writing at Bennington College, Hollins University and Columbia University.

Ms. Desai grew up in an apartment in New Delhi. Her father, Ashwin was a businessman. Ms. Desai is the youngest of four children. Her mother, who had German mother and Indian father, wrote many of her novels when her children were at school in New Delhi. 'She got incredibly disciplined' Ms. Desai said, 'writing was considered at one point a sort of sweet hobby for Kiran. There is big influence of mother Anita Desai on Kiran Desai. 'Because' she said, 'All my life I've grown up hearing her talk about writing and literature and books.' When she was writing this book, she used to talk to her through whole process. She said 'she was very good through that whole time, providing critical support as well as emotional support.' Kiran Desai read and enjoyed Ichiguru's work a lot and Kenzaburo Oe, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Narayan. One of her favorite books is *Pedro Paramo* by Juan Rulf. Mother and daughter have decidedly different writing styles. Ms. Desai, the mother, is a prolific writer of economical, precisely rendered prose. She was a Booker finalist for her novels '*Clear Light of the Day*, '*In Custody*' and '*Fasting and Feasting*.'

It is to be noted that renowned writer Salman Rushdie, describes their divergent styles this way: 'Anita, is a deceptively quiet writer. Kiran is a little bit more showy as a writer. There is little more flamboyance in the prose.' Her parents separated and when Kiran was 16, her mother moved to the United States. Anita Desai became a professor in the writing and Humanistic Studies program at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Ms. Desai attended high school in Amherst, Mass. She went to Bennington college, intending to be a scientist .But she took a writing class and 'it was such revelation' she said .She published her first story 'The Toilet and Rampal the Government Official' about a civil servant sent to a rural area who brings his western style toilet with him.

She enrolled in a graduate writing program at Hollins College in Virginia and began writing a novel, "*Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*" which

published in 1998. It is her first book and won the Betty Trask Award in 1998. It is set in the Indian village of Shahkot [state of Punjab] and the exploits of a young man trying to avoid the responsibilities of adult life.

The impossibly absent-minded Sampath Chawla is sacked from his dismal post-office job after committing an unspeakable outrage at wedding feast of his employer's daughter. Horrified at his father's suggestion, that he apply for a post at the Utterly Butterly Delicious Butter factory, he heads for the hills and takes up residence in a guava orchard on outskirts of town, followed by his affectionate but infuriated family. In this new context, however Sampath's chronic daydreaming is reinterpreted as a life of spiritual contemplation and he swiftly develops a local reputation as a holy man.

This pastoral idyll is shattered by the arrival of the riotous tribe of alcoholic monkeys who move into Sampath's tree, leaving only to make smash and grab raids on local liquor stores and to harass the young woman of Shahkot. The comedy is tempered with a genuine pathos as Sampath helplessly watches destruction of his paradise to impose order on chaos of his own making.

Desai's subtle exploration of the ambiguous nature of Sampath's holiness is one of the novel's major strengths. With *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*, Kiran Desai announced herself as an author in possession of literary equivalent of perfect pitch. This is an utterly charming first novel which possesses what must be one of the silliest denouements in literature. Anita Desai's daughter had a talent all her own, a set of skills too large for the slight but charming tale of an ordinary wastrel turned accidental godman.

After *Hullabaloo* was published, Ms. Desai got a master's degree in writing at Columbia University. *The Inheritance of Loss* is second novel by Kiran Desai. It was first published in 2006. It won a number of awards including the Man Booker Prize for that year, the National Book Critics Circle Fiction Award in 2007 and the 2006 Vodafone Crossword Book Award. This



novel was much harder to write than “Hullabaloo” she said, taking ‘seven years of my being determinedly isolated’.

Ms. Desai wrote the novel, which is based on her family history, in her mother’s home in Cold Spring, N.Y in a completely happy atmosphere of stillness and peace. She said in a soft Anglo-Indian lilt. ‘The light in her house seems golden.’ Desai took the next seven years to write ‘The Inheritance of Loss’ which explores the most serious of topics:

Ms. Desai said when she finished the first draft of ‘Inheritance’, she said, ‘it was an enormous mess.’ She showed it to her mother. ‘She was the only person who really understood bits of it,’ Ms. Desai said ‘it was so close to our family story.’

The story is centered on two main characters: Biju and Sai. Biju is an illegal Indian immigrant living in the United States. Sai is a girl living in Darjeeling. Desai switches the narration between both points of view.

The novel follows the journey of Biju, an illegal immigrant in US who is trying to make a new life and Sai, an Anglicised Indian girl living with her grandfather in India. The novel shows the internal conflict in India between Muslim groups, and Buddhist groups, whilst showing a conflict between past and present. There is the rejection and yet awe of English way of life, the opportunities for money in US, and squalor of living in India, Many leading Indians were considered to be becoming too English and having forgotten the traditional ways of Indian life, shown through the character of grandfather, the Judge. The major theme running throughout is one closely related to colonialism and the effects of post-colonialism: the loss of identity and the way it travels through generations as a sense of loss. Individual within the text show snobbery at those who embody the Indian way of life and vice versa, with the characters displaying anger at the English Indians who have lost their traditions.

Jemubhai Patel in this novel and Anita Desai's Nanda Kaul in '*Fire On the Mountain*' have some similarities. Both of them want to lead a secluded life. They do not want to be disturbed by others. Their grandchild is first one who disturbs their aloneness. At first they feel presence of their grandchildren embarrassing. But, they gradually understand that there are certain similarities between them and their grand-children. In the portrayal of Jemubhai Patel Kiran Desai must have been inspired by the character, Nanda Kaul of her mother.

In her interview she frankly expresses her sincere opinion that 'Being part of the Indian diaspora gives one a precise emotional location to work from, if not a precise geographical one.' According to Kiran Desai literature is located beyond flags and anthems, simple ideas of loyalty. The vocabulary of immigration, of exile, of translation, inevitably overlaps with a realization of the multiple options for reinvention, of myriad perspectives, shifting truths, telling of lies – the great big wobbliness of it all.

She was fighting to create a sense of place while also undoing anyone's claim upon it as being sole, firm or integral. While working on this book she became aware of the novelistic moments that come from many stories overlapping, of realizing that one's place in the world is incidental, it is just perspective, the location is not really firm at all.

In the review of book Pankaj Mishra gives title to second novel as "Wounded by West." According to him it focuses on the fate of few powerless individuals. Kiran Desai's extraordinary new novel manages to explore with intimacy and insight, just about every contemporary international issue: globalization, multiculturalism, economic inequality, fundamentalism and terrorist violence. Despite being set in mid 1980s it seems the best kind of post-9/11 novel.

In her two novels Kiran Desai has portrayed beautiful scenes of nature and landscapes. Orchard and foothills of Himalaya where Kalimpong is

situated gives very suitable and apt setting to the narrative of novel. It appears that Kiran Desai deals with nature, its beauty. It reveals her ecological concerns and she calls upon readers to protect nature, to care for it and create.

Indian English novel has been studied from various aspects. Very few scholars have done ecological study of Indian novels. No one seems to have made an effort to do ecological study of novels of Kiran Desai. The present study aims at studying nature and landscapes used by Kiran Desai in her novels.

The present study adopts theoretical approach to do ecocritical study of novels. This study will be helpful to bring out representations of nature in the novels of Kiran Desai. Ecocritical study of novels would certainly help to understand the contemporary environmental crisis and man's attitude towards nature. Thus it is hoped that this study will be contribution to ecocriticism and it will help to impart importance of environmental matters.

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