



An Eco-Critical Review Of Selected Indian English Writers With Special Mention To The Aspects Of Nature And Human Nature

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the eco-critical approaches in few of the books by Anita Desai, Arundhati Roy, Kamala Markandaya, Ruskin Bond and Amitav Ghosh. The focus of the work is on addressing the continual destruction of the environment and the deterioration of humanity's relationship with it. Since novelists condemn human inhumanity and the abuse of natural components, they are all regarded as excellent environmentalists. Diverse unreasonable and unethical human attitudes towards the environment and one another have long been undermining the planet's hospitable atmosphere. The imperialist inclinations and advancing modernity of the invaders which have destroyed the natural environment and the cordial interaction between man and nature have been highlighted by all novelists in their works. The present article's aim is to examine the eco-critical point of view as they are portrayed in selected international English language literary writings.

KEYWORDS

Eco-criticism, Environmentalism, Diversity, Humanity, Challenges, Literature

INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, the human civilization has posed a serious threat to environment as well as Mother Earth. We're on the verge of a catastrophe because of the extensive mishandling of the environment's resources. The world's rainforests are being destroyed, fossil fuels are running out quickly, seasonal cycles are being thrown off, ecological disasters are happening more frequently, and our ecosystem is on the point of collapse. In the latter decade of the previous century, a new philosophy known as eco-criticism—which examined nature literature—emerged under these circumstances. There is a global movement that emerged in opposition to man's anthropocentric belief that he controls nature. Since environmental concerns are among the most important topics of our day, eco-criticism has expanded quickly in its short history. It's a method of analyzing nature writing that's often linked to environmental criticism.

Through the study of disciplines like Physics, Literature, Anthropology, Sociology, Psychology, and more, eco-criticism investigates how people view nature. India is a nation with a wide variety of wildlife. Technology by itself is insufficient to address environmental challenges on a global scale. Due to the ongoing natural disasters, our ecology is not healthy. A blend of theoretical and ecological discourse is called eco-criticism. It explores its boundaries and examines how nature and humanity interact. The study warns people that mistreating nature could eventually cause an explosion of natural forces. Many authors have used naturalistic imagery to convey the motivations, weaknesses, and feelings of their characters. Every creature on our planet has intrinsic worth.

The novel, *Fire on the Mountain* by Indian novelist Anita Desai tackles problems of animal hunting, population increase, and moral deterioration in humans, all of which pose a threat to the ecosystem and are symbolized by frequent forest fires.

Here, the novelist demonstrates her profound awareness of the pressing environmental issues of the day. In her novel, Anita Desai examines the horrific destruction of nature while also taking into account the factors that contributed to its dehumanization.

One more powerful example of eco-critical writing is Amitav Ghosh's, *The Hungry Tide* (Mishra, 2016; Kaur, 2017). *The Hungry Tide* symbolizes the ongoing changes that the mangrove forest islands and mudflats of the Sundarbans ecosystem experience on a daily basis. (Sree, 2018).

The God of Small Things by Arundhati Roy aims to increase public awareness of nature in order to protect the ecosystem and preserve it for future generations (Geetanjali, 2018). Her concern centers on how transformation has impacted biodiversity. River Meenachal is filthy, and the History House—once a symbol of heritage—has been transformed into a five-star hotel. Her garden is unkempt, and a different weed has choked out the region's rare breeds. The increase in population has also put a great deal of strain on the environment. As a result, technologically advanced nations are losing their biodiversity in the name of progress (Maral, 2013). Roy examines the relationship between humans and environment and illustrates a river with religious significance. Rivers are development tools, likened to the course of human life as they flow through many obstacles en route to their final destination. Due to numerous human activities, including the widespread use of pesticides, industrialization-related river water contamination, building of huge dams, cleaning, combining dirty and clean river water, etc., they are currently declining (Vaishali, 2007).

Criticism of the environment employs literary analysis to draw attention to pivotal environmental challenges around the globe (Geetanjali, 2018). Kamala Markandaya's novel, *Nectar in a Sieve* (1954) gives a fantastic example of how to use and illustrate nature imagery.

In her work, Kamala Markandaya laments the deterioration of the landscape and uses eco-criticism, or eco-critiques, to try and speak for nature in order to better comprehend and address environmental challenges (Patidar, 2019).

Amitav Ghosh's, *The Hungry Tide*, Arundhati Roy's, *The God of Small Things*, Kamala Markandaya's, *Nectar in a Sieve*, Ruskin Bond's, *Dust on the Mountains* and Anita Desai's, *Fire on the Mountain* serve as the foundation for the suggested study's eco-criticism viewpoint. To develop a critical understanding of eco-criticism (man and environment), the insights offered by various critical techniques and theoretical frameworks will be used. Studying the selected novelists' representations of eco-critical approaches in their literary works is crucial. English novelists are environmentally sensitive; they have highlighted nature on a global scale by using it as a lovely backdrop in their works.

A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE AVAILABLE ECO-CRITICAL STUDIES OF SELECTED INDIAN WRITERS

Eco-criticism has been a major area of attention for many literary study projects. Below is a quick summary of the accessible eco-critical studies, the majority of which are academic papers:

In his 2016 published book, *Ecocriticism: A study of environmental issues in literature*, Sandeep Kumar Mishra talked about the dangers the environment posed to Mother Earth. Due to the extensive use of environmental resources, we are in danger of a calamity. He clarified how, in reaction to these limitations, a novel paradigm of reading nature literature known as eco-criticism emerged in the last decade of the previous century. In her 1996 published book, *Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Eco-criticism*, Rueckert William noted that the world's rainforests are being destroyed, fossil fuels are running out quickly, the seasonal cycle is out of balance, ecological disasters are occurring more frequently, and our ecosystem is nearing extinction. Environmentally focused literary studies enhance readers' ecological literacy, making them more environmentally conscious and better stewards of Mother Nature, according to Violina Borah's 2017 published book, *Eco-criticism: Understanding the Relationship between Nature and Literature..*

Gaurav Mishra on *Towards an Eco-critical Reading of Amitav Ghosh's, 'The Hungry Tide'* (2018) explains how environmental calamities impact the modern world. Science and technology by themselves cannot avert the global ecological calamity; we also need to change the way we think about the natural world. There is an infinite amount of literature that highlights the power and beauty of nature, according to Rueckert William's, *Literature and Ecology: An experiment in Eco-criticism* (1996).

Lately, environmental issues and the risks that unrelenting exploitation of the environment offers to humans have captured the novelist's attention. In her 2017 published book, *Eco-criticism: understanding the relationship between Nature and Literature*, Violina Borah provided an explanation of the emerging field of literary theory known as eco-criticism. *Eco-criticism: A study of environmental issues in literature*, by Sandeep Kumar Mishra (2016) noted that a number of writers have voiced their concern for the environment due to human selfishness and the population expansion.

SELECTED INDIAN WRITERS

Following are some of the selected Indian novels by various novelists: Amitav Ghosh's, *The Hungry Tide*, Arundhati Roy's, *The God of Small Things*, Kamala Markandaya's, *Nectar in a Sieve*, Ruskin Bond's, *Dust on the Mountains* and Anita Desai's, *Fire on the Mountain*.

1. The Hungry Tide by Amitav Ghosh in the light of eco-criticism exposes the damaging ecological and social systems that humans have created. It has been said that the Sundarbans delta is both a destroyer and a preserver of life. The novel describes how the government-sponsored terrorism in Marichjhapi was utilized to drive out desperate Bengali refugees.

It takes a unique three-person hike up a river to find the critically endangered Irrawaddy dolphin in the Sundarbans. In 2004, it was awarded the Hutch Crossword Book Award for Fiction. The Sundarbans are a huge network of tiny islands in the Bay of Bengal, off the coast of eastern India. Here, tigers frequently attack newcomers, and the possibility of being evicted and the following social unrest is a continuous threat. Tidal floods can happen at any time and without warning, causing havoc as they go. This place of bitter beauty is where the lives of three people from various origins come together. The main character, Piyali Roy, is a young marine researcher with Bengali-Indian ancestry who describes herself as a staunchly American. She attended the Scripps Institution of Oceanography in La Jolla and was

raised in Seattle. In search of *Orcaella Brevirostris*, a rare and endangered dolphin, she travels to the Sundarbans. She meets businessman and translator Kanai Dutt while traveling on the Kolkata Suburban Railway towards Port Canning during her tour to the Sundarbans. Upon arriving, she borrows a boat to search for dolphins, but her mission turns tragic when she is thrown from the boat into an area populated with crocodiles. An illiterate teenage fisherman named Fokir comes to her help. Even though they are unable to speak, Piya and Fokir are deeply bonded to one another. The three of them were unintentionally sucked into the hidden undercurrent of this remote country as they explored the tidal backwaters, where political unrest exacts a human cost as severe as the rushing tide.

The work explores topics like humanism and environment, especially when they collide. Amitav Ghosh's novel, *Hungry Tide* is a noteworthy example of eco-critical analysis since it exposes the repressive systems that are both social and environmental. It has been said that the Sundarbans delta both destroys and preserves life. In *Eco-Critical Study of Amitav Ghosh's, 'The Hungry Tide'*, Anitha Sree (2018) investigates how the environment affects people. The primary cause of environmental and ecological problems, as well as the origin of hungry tides and earthquakes, is the disappearance of mangroves, which provide a habitat for aquatic creatures, frogs, and nautical birds. Maha Lakshmi's article, *Exploring the Bond between Man and Nature in Amitav Ghosh's 'The Hungry Tide'* (Basu, 2020) explores the possibility of doing an ethical evaluation of human responsibility for the environment, the value of nature and the environment, how people interact with them, and how they are ultimately used by humans for personal advantage.

An ecological vision for the Sundarbans was suggested by Gaurav Mishra in his 2018 paper, *Ecological Vision Regarding the Sundarbans: Towards an Ecocritical Reading of Amitav Ghosh's, 'The Hungry Tide'*. This essay focuses on encouraging readers to become more ecologically conscious. They were in favor of humans and nature coexisting in harmony. In Nafisa Bagwan's 2018 article, *Eco-Criticism in Amitav Ghosh's, 'The Hungry Tide'*, the conflict between humanity and the environment is a recurrent theme set against the backdrop of the Sundarbans in Bangladesh and India. The current literature reflects conflicts that exist between the local people and the marine and natural life of the Sunderbans. *Discourses of Eco-criticism: A study of Amitav Ghosh 'The Hungry Tide'* by Meena Kumari (2017) by mixing mythology, history, experience, and tales, demonstrates how Ghosh, particularly in *The Hungry Tide*, creates nature to illustrate how people can interact with other living things. Sultana Gousia's purpose of writing the *Impact of Nature in Amitav Ghosh's, 'The Hungry Tide'* (2022) is to emphasize how the characters in the wasteland are impacted by nature. It also emphasizes the heartbreaking battle that the displaced refugees have as they attempt to define who they are in Morichjhapi. The Morichjhha episode elucidates the ways in which environmental conservation initiatives impact the lower class. Environmental studies and literature are both researched in the multidisciplinary topic of eco-criticism.

In *Fiction for Sustainability: An Eco-critical Assessment of Amitav Ghosh's 'The Hungry Tide'* (2019), Mitalee Gangal takes an eco-critical stance in analyzing the work. The volatile climate, environmental issues, local history, and mythology are all entwined with the conflicting romantic interests of the major protagonists, Kannai, Piya, Fokir, and Moyna. The ecological crisis is investigated in Sudhrojit Chatterji's article published in 2021, *Eco-criticism and Post colonialism in Amitav Ghosh's 'The Hungry Tide'*, by looking at how literature and the natural world interact through the prism of eco-criticism. The anthropocentric approach to development in the ecologically vulnerable Sundarbans region is a contributing factor to the extinction of tigers and other native inhabitants, as Ghosh shows in his analysis of animal-human conflict in the area. In her 2017 book, *Eco-criticism: Understanding the Relationship between Nature and Literature*, Violina Borah explains how the environment is exploited and how ecology works. The conflict between nature and humans in India's sun-belt is summed up in *The Hungry Tide*. In her book, *Eco- Criticism: A Literary Approach to Nature* (2021), Ruchi Tomar examines the coercive methods used by humans to misuse and abuse natural resources as well as the

relationships that exist between the natural world and humankind. It also discusses the imbalance that exists between man and nature and between the flora and animals.

2. Eco-critical methodology in Arundhati Roy's book, *The God of Small Things*: explores the human abuse of nature for the sake of progress and civilization. The author has shown a thorough comprehension of the pressing environmental issues of today. The author of this book has spoken out in favor of the environment, which is today gravely threatened by pollution. In her writings, she not only documents the massive devastation of nature, but she also delves into the causes of its dehumanization. In today's worldwide culture, environmental balance is essential. Many writers and poets now identify themselves as ecologically conscious or eco-aware. Writers like Arundhati Roy, Anita Desai, Amitav Ghosh, Kamala Markandaya, have used nature as scenery, a lovely setting, or a dynamic atmosphere in many places across the world. Literature has developed into a medium for discussing the environment and its importance to both the universe and human existence. Because of ecological imbalance and environmental deterioration, global warming is a scourge facing the entire earth. It's time for a balanced, healthy atmosphere which is the lifeblood of the universe. Arundhati Roy's book, *The God of Small Things* depicts nature. She has interacted with nature over the past twenty-three years as well as in the present. She talks about how nature is being exploited far beyond its ability for recuperation in the essay. Nature has suffered so much damage that its calming power has been lost. Ayemenen's lifeline, the river Meenachal, is contaminated, and the historically significant History House has been converted into a five-star hotel. The river Meenachal that runs behind the hotel becomes unpleasant and violent, as the surroundings have changed. Pappachi recognized insects that need to be conserved, like moths. People's lives are becoming more mechanical, as demonstrated by Baby Kochamma, who abandoned gardening because she preferred to watch television. Baby Kochamma used to like gardening. Her garden is a complete mess, and another weed patch is suppressing the unique breeds in the area. Roy has made an effort to illustrate how development results in the degradation of natural habitats.

The book, *Ecocriticism in Arundhati Roy's, 'The God of Small Things'* in 2013, explores how nature is exploited. Geetanjali's, *The God of small things: Arundhati Roy's Ecocriticism and Environmental Consciousness* (2018) focuses on the idea that humans should only consume natural resources to the extent that they can replenish themselves and meet the needs of future generations. This research emphasizes the difficulties associated with environmental injustice. How declining ecological health is, it appears influenced by the increase in population. It looks into how humans should ethically evaluate their responsibilities to the environment, of which we are all a part. The detrimental effects of rivers are examined in Vaishali's book, *Exploration of Man and Nature Relationship through Eco-criticism: A Study of River in the God of Small Things* (2017), which describes how floods can take human lives. This attempts to explore the interactions between man-made and natural ecosystems, especially as it relates to rivers. In her book, *Eco-criticism: A Literary Approach to Nature* (2021), Ruchi Tomar examines the ways in which people misuse and take use of the natural world for the purposes of industrialization and modernization.

3. Eco-critical analysis of *Nectar in a Sieve*:

Nature is shown in *Nectar in a Sieve* by Kamala Markandaya as both a destroyer and a preserver of life. The author has emphasized how industrialization's faults destroy the peaceful coexistence of a peasant's life. Kamala Markandaya is a well-known female writer, whose works explore a range of themes related to oppression and subjugation, starting with abuse brought on by casteism, poverty, and societal norms. She has addressed the environmental concerns of women in her critically acclaimed work, *Nectar in a Sieve*, in a harsh manner. In her paintings, Kamala Markandaya eloquently exposes the suffering and wounding of women and the natural world at the hands of male authority. She has spoken on the marginalization of women in cultures where men

predominate. She equates nature to a woman's body and makes readers believe that society which is governed by ideas that are directed toward men, exploits both nature and women. In these societies, women and nature are viewed as inferior, even though both are able to bear children and provide nourishment. This mistreatment has awokened women to the lack of love for nature in the male-dominated world. As a result, women have occasionally united to protest this abuse of nature because they can relate to the pain of nature. Nature is often linked to mother or feminine qualities including tenderness, retorting, repression, and a nurturing disposition. Kamala Markandaya's, *Nectar in a Sieve* vividly depicts the devastation and women's suffering at the hands of male authority in her writings. She gave an example of how the lovely equilibrium of peasant life has been destroyed by industrialization. The book, *Effect of Industrialization on the Nature-Culture Connection: An Eco-critical investigation of Nectar in a Sieve* (2019) by Ranjna Patidar examines and evaluates the connection between nature and civilization.

In *An Analysis of Kamala Markandaya Nectar in a Sieve through the lens of Eco-criticism* (2021), Alina Sajan explores the ecological critique that contends, on the one hand, humankind's insatiable greed causes environmental harm and, on the other, that it is important to preserve and protect natural resources. In *Kamala Markandaya Nectar in a Sieve: The Picture of Ecological Consciousness*, Susanta Kumar Sahu (2020) investigates how Indian English fiction has developed the concept of the writing through an eco-critical perspective. Ecology is currently defined as the interaction between living things, such as people, animals, and plants, and their surroundings. At present, a balanced, healthy atmosphere and environment are necessary. The relationship between nature and human being is explained by Arun Kumar Biswas in *Negotiating between the human and the non-human: Representation of environmental issues and concerns in Kamala Markandaya Nectar in a Sieve* (2022). According to Violina Borah's 2017 study, *Ecocriticism - understanding the relationship between nature and literature*, the natural environment and literature go hand in hand. Books that discuss the majesty and power of nature are widely available. In her article *Eco-Criticism: An alternative approach to Nature*, Ruchi Tamar (2020) examines Kamala Markandaya's, *Nectar in Sieve*, which portray nature as both a destroyer and a preserver. The novelist's work demonstrated the detrimental effects of industrialization as well as the serenity and tranquility one could find in a peasant lifestyle. Living things can, therefore, benefit from a safe and secure future generation by developing sustainably and using resources sparingly.

4. An eco-critical viewpoint on Anita Desai's, *Fire on the Mountains*:

Anita Desai's, *Fire on the Mountains* is an excellent illustration of an eco-critical novel addressing the issues of animals. Periodic fires in the forest are a symbol of the three things that threaten the environment: deforestation, population growth, and moral degradation of humans. Nature will always be there at some point in the future, as it is a motif in all popular forms of culture. Though it has occasionally been neglected, nature has also been praised and revered. There are many literary works that describe the natural world, including hills, valleys, rivers, mountains, and landscapes. Literature, the most widely read art form, has never been immune to this fundamental problem of man and his physical surrounds, human and non-human relationships. To achieve the intended impression, authors carefully consider the location, ambience, and overall mood when creating their literary works. The main objective of the theory that gave rise to eco-criticism was to provide a microscopic analysis of a cultural work in relation to its trade with nature. Seldom has English-language Indian writing received criticism. The 1977 Sahitya Academy Award winner, *Fire on the Mountain* by Anita Desai is deeply ingrained in the Kasauli landscape. The story describes the gradual deterioration of the Kasauli Hills' ecosystem and its ultimate destruction by a large forest fire. It's interesting how this progressive desiccation is reflected in the novel's characters. The dryness of the Kasauli hills is reflected in the nature of Nanda Kaul. Ila Das's mistreatment and demise are like an intense forest fire.

Anita Desai's book, *Fire on the Mountain*, addresses the moral decay of humanity and the problem of animal slaughter, both of which represent a threat to the ecosystem and are symbolized by regular forest fires. In *Representation of Man and Nature: An Ecocritical Reading of Anita Desai's Fire on the Mountain*, published in 2020, Juri Bordoloi explores the relationship between nature and humankind as well as the effects of urbanization and the industrial revolution. Environmental problems, such as global warming, deforestation, and climate change, have gained international attention due to their implications on all members of humanity. Das and Narayan Jena, the 2013 book, *Nature-human Interface: An Eco-critical study of Anita Desai's Fire on the Mountain* examines how industrialization and other human development strategies contaminate and ruin the environment while also highlighting the essential role that nature plays in reshaping human existence. *An Eco-critical Approach to Anita Desai's Fire on the Mountain* by Poulami Ganguly (2017), examines the relationships between people and the natural world. *Environmental Degradation in Kasauli: An Ecocritical Reading of Anita Desai's* by Anita Konwar exhibits the humongous degradation caused by human activities.

5. Eco-critical approach in Ruskin Bond's work, *Dust on the Mountains* demonstrates ecology as both a major theme and a source of considerable concern due to the depletion of natural resources. He strives to make a connection between human welfare and the protection of nature. He recognizes and envisions the ultimate reality of existence.

A recurring motif in several of his writings is the deliberate removal of trees from mountain slopes in the name of development and progress. In the tale, *Dust on the Mountains*, money-lenders entice unsophisticated people in the hills. The narrative paints a horrifying picture of the "green" massacre:

"There were trees here once, but the contractors took the deodars for furniture. And the pines were trapped to death for resin, and the oaks were stripped off their leaves to feed cattle."

Amita Aggarwal in *The fictional world of Ruskin Bond* states that in many of his tales, Bond also addresses the extinction of tigers and leopards. He firmly believes that the perception of tigers and other animals by the simple people is exaggerated. They only attack people when they are wounded by a bullet and are unable to find food.

In a different tale, *The Leopard*, a country boy goes into the forest by himself and is unprotected. He and the beast come to a wordless understanding. He enjoys having the majestic beast crouching by the riverbank, and the beast appears to be amicably aware of his presence in return. Both have self-assurance in one another. By maintaining this trusting relationship, Kishen Singh in the tale, *The Tunnel*, appears to reassure the leopard. In response to a query concerning safety in the woods, Kishen Singh says,

"It is safer in the jungle than in the towns. No rascal out here. Only last week when I went into the town I had my pocket picked. Leopards do not pick pockets."

Man, the tiger, and the forest are interdependent. They are a link in the vast survival chain. Ecological balance has been strengthened by Bond's reference to the endangered beast as India's soul. Every living thing on earth, no matter how big or small is necessary to maintain its beauty and health.

As Gulnaz Fatma in her work, *Ruskin Bond's World*, mentions that the theme of "Save Tigers, Save Wildlife" has been deftly woven throughout Bond's fictional stories. In addition to fauna, Bond fervently begs to preserve the earth's green layer. The old idea reveals the interaction between man and tree: "A blessing rests on the house where the shadow of a tree falls."

CONCLUSION

In all of the main canonical literatures, the environment is highlighted as a crucial component of human civilization. An ecological realization could open people's eyes to a lot of new perspectives. This is applicable to Indian literature and philosophy. Ancient to cyber-age, Indian literature is full of discussion regarding environmental problems. Famous works of regional literature translated into English also have depictions of nature, in addition to traditional Indian writing in English. They impart to us the wisdom of leading a happy life in harmony with the natural world. A key issue in eco literature, the interplay and interdependence of human nature is skillfully addressed in these literary works about the environment. The main idea is to protect the pure beauty of nature—let's not destroy what we are powerless to create. Eco-criticism explores its boundaries and examines how humans and the natural world interact. The study serves as a cautionary tale to people about the misuse of nature.

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