Green Spirituality

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Abstract
Pollution or Ecological crisis is a major problem of the world and different disciplines and organizations are working on it. Nowadays literature is also very much concerned about this crisis and is working in its own way. Whatsoever, the relation between nature and literature is very old but presently, the scenario in this relation has changed. Therefore, this paper will concentrate on relation between Nature, Literature and Human beings and will try to focus on natural or green spirituality. The study of the relation between literature and physical nature is called Ecocriticism, which, has accumulated different types of theories from different disciplines like Philosophy, Science, Economics, Environmental Science, Cultural studies etc. It is an interdisciplinary approach to theory. This paper will extract the theory from Ecological philosophy and will study about ecological crisis and its solution through Green Spirituality.

Keywords: Ecological Crisis, Ecocriticism, Ecological Philosophy, Green Spirituality
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Introduction

There is a long history of literary power. Literature is not only the mirror of society but it has the power of revolution too. Literature can be anything ranging from poetry, fiction, to politics, science, philosophy, history, etc. It has form of liquid energy but it doesn’t mean that it lacks certainty in its form. There have been various attempts to define literature. But even the briefest reflection on what people commonly include under the heading of literature suggests that this will not do.¹ With the flow of time things change, and the lifestyle of society impacts the literature directly or indirectly. The contemporary literary perspectives are also changing. Nowadays, literature is concerned with ecological crisis, and creative writing is moving forward to bring a balance in ecology.

In the Occidental and the Oriental philosophy/psychology, behaviour and lila has different meanings and implications but it can come together. The function of common people can be called behaviour and the lila is the a kind of metaphysical deed. Basically, behaviour is connected with the physical world and virtual reality whereas lila is the play of conscience. Under the rubric of postmodern approach to literature, Eco-criticism as a theory of physical nature and literature has adopted different ideas and concepts encompassing various strains of thoughts. Eco-philosophy is an enterprise where Eco-criticism plays a wider role where Deep ecology and Gaia hypothesis are key concepts.

Deep ecology, a term coined by a Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess, in his article The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement (1973), is one of the most important contemporary approaches to Eco-philosophy. He propounds that deep ecology is a tacit energy which drives the ecosystem, and ‘reason’ maintains the balance in ecology from the core. However, humans can see or feel the ecosystem but cannot find out the energy which is operating that ecosystem. In contrast, the environmental scientist and others focus on physical aspects of ecology, which

¹ Terry Eagleton, 1996, Literary Theory, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, UK, pg. 1
Naess calls it shallow ecology. Since, eco-philosophy and eco-criticism take an interior perspective on ecology; hence, deep ecology is also called Holistic Ecology.

Gaia is a goddess in Greek mythology personifying the Earth and represents fertility. The Gaia Hypothesis states that living organisms and inorganic material are part of a dynamic system that shape Earth’s biosphere. The earth is a self-regulating environment; a single, unified, cooperating and living system - a super organism that regulates physical conditions to keep the environment hospitable for life. Evolution, therefore, is the result of cooperative process rather than of competitive process. \(^2\)

In Indian philosophy, the earth is the mother of all living and nonliving beings. Hence, all are part of the earth as her constituent. It is also advocated that humans should follow and obey her nature and norms, and can make use of her in sustainable ways. In considering the prevalent scenario of her over exploitation resulting in 'threat zone', it is imperative to study nature not only in scientific ways but along with ethical and spiritual perspectives. This concern is also reflected in Deep ecology as well as in the Gaia hypothesis.

In this period of human history, ecological crisis is a major problem. It is evidently reflected in literature as a response to the prevailing situation, in addition to the several other aspects on which literature focuses. Although the relation between nature and literature is time immemorial, the latter germinates from nature and grows within it manifesting a symbiotic relationship between them. Literary practitioners pick their thoughts from nature; enrich it by feelings, emotions and knowledge; and express it through creative use of language. Therefore, without nature or wilderness literature would be futile.

Nature was always a part of literature even before Romanticism. In the Romantic period, nature was largely used as metaphor, image figure, etc. In modernism, nature continued to be a part of literary expressions. However, in and the postmodern literary context, nature and Environment became major thematic occupations addressing the environmental issues like deforestation, pollution, ozone-hole problem, green house gases, settlements, etc. In other words, the post modern literature addresses the ills of conceiving Nature as a source to fulfil human needs and

\(^2\) The Gaia Hypothesis, content by M. Alan Kazlev, 2004, www.gaiahypothesis.org /01/04/2015/03:30 pm
greed, and the emerging threats to its very existence by anthropocentric life style approach. In order to reverse this approach, and, consequently the over-exploitation of nature, literature addresses the flaws in the approach, and advocates Green spirituality.

In eco-philosophy, nature is conceived as animate and bestowed with powers and limitations. With the growing consumerism and its off shots, Nature is entering the danger zone; and humans are losing their ethics and emotions, and are transforming into mechanised existence. It is also conceived that the negative attitude towards nature has lead to the erosion of ecological balance. In this setting, literature assumes to rectify the ecological imbalance by fostering a healthy outlook towards nature. In other words, how can literature construct or reconstruct the human sentiments for nature which is eroded? Consequently, how literature can bring balance in ecology through writings? Finally, is it possible for literature to address these issues on the relationship between human and nature?

Prior to address these questions, it is necessary to believe that literature is potential to bring the change as it has direct communication with humans and their sentiments as well as with the society. Paradoxically, humans are in search of inner peace and bliss. In this context, literature can contribute through Green spirituality.

Green Spirituality: A New Path

Eco-criticism, a literary and cultural criticism from an environmentalist viewpoint,\(^3\) is the connection between nature and society establishing a relationship between Gaia and human conscience. In other words, Eco-criticism takes an earth-centric approach to literary studies.

In the matrix of eco-criticism, Green Spirituality discusses the role of human being in relation to the Nature. Nature is not understood in detail or in depth by observing its outer and materialistic perspectives as it has many forms and of dynamic appearance. It can be energy, solid, gas, feelings, emotions, etc. In order to understand nature and her functions, it is necessary to follow her with subtle mind and

conscience. However, such a conception leads to a couple of queries – can we solve the problems of nature? If yes, then how?

Often, we are misleading by a belief that nature can be vitalized by planting trees or keeping our environment clean. But such efforts are not adequate to address the inner aspect of nature. Hence, the inner cleansing is essential to address the issue. Humans can make a difference by bringing changes in ethical, moral, emotional, mental and physical outlook towards nature. In the Occidental philosophy/psychology, this aspect of human is known as *behaviour*; and in Oriental, it has been conceptualized as *lila*. Although these two distinct concepts have different meanings and implications, but it can be synthesized into a single parameter. Basically, *behaviour* is connected with the physical world and virtual reality whereas *lila* is the play of conscience. A renowned Nepali poet Lekhnath Poudyal writes in ‘Tarun Tapasi’:

> In insects, birds, humans, animals, creepers, and even in trees
> Oh! All are in the same divine circle of the ultimate Conscience
> They are flourishing, but why to suspect them
> Let inner conscience bring peace in nature

In the above stanza, Poudyal profess that all the creatures have an aura of divine conscience, yet humans do suspect the very nature of such existence. The poet advocates that inner conscience can overcome this very doubt, and can bring peace and tranquillity. This is in line with the Green spirituality, which posits that all creatures are part of deep ecology, and through conscience we can acknowledge the very fact that we all are part of the same.

In the Indian tradition the self realization was a great practice and the Rishis were much closed to Nature. They found, to know the power god energy human should go parallels with the nature even if human wants to explain the existence of Aatma or soul he/she should know the *lila* of the nature. The external and internal growths of human are influence by nature because the function of growth of nature and human are same. Therefore nature and human has direct connection which cannot be broken. But nowadays human’s life style, behaviour, thinking, notions and deed are
interfering in the nature’s settlement. To fix the relation between nature and human, literature is the best way. Thus, the literature is very convenient to reach the nature. It works sensitively, emotionally, ethically, it is not only the package of political or social slogan; it is an art with full of imagination power. And, that power can change the world. Therefore, the eco-criticism introduces different way and notion to reach the nature, among them the Green Spirituality is very crucial. There is a strong green thread winding its way through literary studies these days, knitting the globe together intellectually and creating a network of literary scholars committed to environmental service\textsuperscript{4} but the thing is that how can it possible to bridge between the society and the nature? Does physical or materialistic research and investigations are enough?

Nowadays people are wearing word proof jacket. Bulletproof jacket save from bullet, waterproof save from water similarly, the words are not reaching human’s conscience because of word proof. We accept that the human are part of nature but we never tried to find out how we part of this? So, people must uncover that jacket. But, by which tool can uncover word proof jacket? And, the answer is Green Spirituality. Anand Amaladass says ‘Save the earth’ was the motto of the conference in Rio in 1992. Instead ‘serve the earth’ would have been more appropriate.\textsuperscript{5}

Grandma and grandpa used to tell a story when we were kids. They always started their story by saying long-long time ago there was a gross jungle, where a giant tiger used to live. I enthusiastically used to think that I will definitely go to that jungle one day. Gradually, when I became young, I never found grandma and grandpa’s jungle. Now I am thinking where that jungle has gone? In answer, I found that; because of our unnecessary desire and unlimited greediness the jungles were cut or vanished to establish human settlements. In 19\textsuperscript{th} century, half of the jungles were cut down and in this 21\textsuperscript{st} century still somewhere, some part of the world the jungles are still being cut down. However, governments are making the policy each and every year to save the jungle but implications are not in the right way. Therefore, most of the animals, birds, plants are in thread zone thus, disturbing the ecological balance.

\textsuperscript{4}Cheryll Glotfelty, 2007 The Strong Green Thread, \textit{Essay in Ecocriticism}, Nirmal Selvamony, Nirmaladasan, Rayson k. Alex, ed. Sarup& Sons New Delhi, pg.4
In 21\textsuperscript{st} century humans are getting everything and having a luxurious and mechanical life. With the changes of lifestyle people are losing their humanity, moral values. Human should know that life has two parts: materialistic and spiritual (moral). The basic need of human is matter, no doubt, but it is not everything and the ultimate. Humans are social animals and in society spirituality and moral knowledge has importance and that morality should be for nature because nature is the core of human civilization and humans are a part of it. In Indian mythology, there are several examples of relations between nature and humans; the important thing is that the Indian mythology has given more magnitude to nature rather than its destruction. Upanishad says \textit{vasudhaiv kutumkam} means whole world is one family \textit{Lok samsta sukhih avantu} very one lives in bliss and in Buddhism \textit{ahinsa paramo dharm}; non violence is the best religion. Therefore, nature is the source of human life and it should be saved from harm. But the present scenario is very different. Humans themselves destroy nature and making the imbalance in ecology. Therefore, Eco-critics are working on the relation between nature and literature for maintaining the harmony. Eco-criticism is interdisciplinary new literary theory which influences the whole literature of the world and it is raising the contemporary problem i.e. ecological crisis. So the question is how literature works on it? As previously said that Eco-criticism is an interdisciplinary literary theory and it takes different views from various disciplines, so the thought of Green Spirituality is important approach of the eco-philosophy. It says that to save nature, human should accept his/her self as a part of nature ethically or morally as well practically. The natural resources also have certain limits, so the humans cannot use it unlimitedly. Humans, unquestionably, have a very vital responsibility for saving nature, when they take this responsibility from within themselves or morally only then nature can get more life, otherwise it will be collapsed before its time. At present human civilization and technology are in extreme phase. No one has time for nature and on the other hand humans are unheeding their responsibilities. In these circumstances it is very difficult to maintain a balance in ecology, so some spiritual or moral knowledge is required in society and literature is the best way for communication. Green literature or eco-literature is taking some philosophical approach and method to change the view of society against nature.
Spirituality has not only meaning of worship of god; spirituality means the knowledge of harmony and humanity. Going temple, church, masque and worship the god is not spirituality, as well reading the spiritual books is also cannot define spirituality. Preciously, when we enlighten from inner space and when we feel nature from conscience.

Earth, Environment and Nature have comparable meaning but when we delve deeper into the philosophical meaning there is a difference. Earth is a living planet; Environment means the space surrounding the Earth by plants, rivers, seas, hills, mountains, animals, atmosphere etc. But Nature is an animate power by which all living and non-living things can survive (it’s like the human soul). Human cannot live without soul and soul cannot exist without nature. Human body is formed by panchattatwa (five elements), panchayyanandriya, panchakarmandriya, panchakos and panchapran. After that four Antahaskarana (conscience) and then after there is the place for soul or Aatma and that Aatma is nature. Therefore, the colour of Aatma is Green. So literature is imploring for this Nature to be saved. If humans are not aware today, it will be too late. Therefore, the poets, writers and critics are trying to revive the morality of humans for Nature; they are also trying to bring a new idea i.e. Green Spirituality. Consciously or unconsciously, human beings should respect Nature and it is very important that the human should bring his/her ethical realization to save ecological crisis. Bron Tylor says Earth and nature-based spirituality is proliferating globally.6 Basically Green spirituality is the new understanding of the reality of nature. And the spiritual life, the life of imagination and the heart is an endowment of humanity that is primal. It works against the elevation of the use of reason beyond the borders of reason’s competence.7 The internal attribute of human is spiritual but due to consumerism and anthropocentric thoughts human lose their values and duties and the spiritual connection of humans are sinking from the natural connection but the seeking of spiritual connection through nature is the foundation of earth-based spirituality. Without the help of human moral sense or ethics, the ecological crisis


7Lorna Marsden, 1991, People and Planet, the Spiritual Dimension’, The Friend’s Quarterly.
cannot be solved. Therefore only literature can contain the emotion of humans, it can change the attitude of humans and also can help to bring Green Spirituality in his/her mind.

**Conclusion**

Indian poetics and aesthetics have very old and dynamic history and the core concept of the Indian poetic and aesthetics is spirituality. *Shrimad Bhagwat Puranasays तेनेःबःदयेआिदकिवयेः* means, Bramha is the first poet of this world because from his heart or thoughts the entire nature was created. So, Indian poetics actually concentrates on nature and ecology. There are various stories and theories which may be found in *Vedas*, *Upanisadas* and *Puranas* which indicate that the base of human life as well literature is nature, and from the beginning it is talking about nature and ecology. In *Shrimad Bhagwat Gita* there are various examples we can find, it says in chapter 3, verse 14-15:

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\text{अनन्यं देवधिनोबोधितं भूतानं परमधिनो संभवः। यस्य देवधिनो योगः कर्मसमु भवः।।}
\]

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\text{तस्याः सवधिनो च भद्रवर्गाः समु समु भवः।।}
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Means, all the human beings and animals are created from the crops (nature) and the crops are possible from rain, for rain is spiritual ceremony or *ygya* (during the *ygya* many natural materials are scarified and it becomes smoke which is in turn transformed into clouds) is required. Only the moral or humble people can do *ygya*, literally his/her moral or ethical works and thoughts should contribute for something good to nature. Therefore, you (human) should realize that you are the part of *parmatma* (supreme god/nature) and when you accept it from conscience then only you will get nirvana or you can save the nature.

Eco-spirituality or Green Spirituality celebrates the cyclical nature of life, the dance of light and dark, activity and rest, expansion and contraction. In a culture that demands constant productivity and upward mobility, Eco-spirituality or Green spirituality offers a framework for the natural ebbs and flows of a day, a year, or a
lifetime. So, literature has big responsibility nowadays, firstly it should revive the moral values of humans towards nature and bring it near to Green Spirituality to let live and thus, to live.

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8 Jeanne Mackey, M.S.W, 2003, *Time to Kiss the Earth Again: An Exploration of Ecospirituality*. Wholistic Wellness Network, Inc. 5/08/2015
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