Introduction: An Overview of Ecocriticism

The New Literatures in English among other manifest and symbolic representations also deal with nature as a very significant issue. The environmental devastation consequent upon the colonization involving social and cultural transformations has altered representations of nature in Postcolonial cultures and literatures. The shift of emphasis towards the ecological study, a rapidly growing field, Ecocriticism covers a wide range of theories and areas of interest, particularly the relationship between literature and the environment. The interpretations presented involve eco-critical perspectives that can be applied to literary and non-literary texts. Nature itself is a new interpretative category in line with other paradigms such as race, class, gender, and identity. In eco-critical texts, nature features as the main topic or protagonist. Other concerns are nature as a cultural construct, gendered natures and the city/country dichotomy.

Origin and History: A Theoretical Introduction of Ecocriticism

Ecocriticism is an umbrella term used to refer to the environmentally oriented study of literature and the art, and the theories that underline such critical practice. It is a new critical method available to critics to analyze the literature. It is concerned with nature writing and ecological themes in all literature. It deals with ecological problems like pollution, global warming, climate change, deforestation, species extinction and other ecological exploitations. It is associated with the desire to investigate and remedy the current environmental problems. It is the study of literature and environment from an interdisciplinary point of view where all sciences come together to analyze the environment and brainstorm possible solutions for the correction of the contemporary environmental problems.

Nature is no longer a vast realm of unknown, unmanageable or uncontrollable wild non-human activity. Much of the earth is a built environment and a planned habitat as atmospheric chemistry is modified by pollution, weather events are restructured by urbanization, architecture encloses whole biomes in sprawling megacities and biotechnology re-engineers the base codes of existing biomass. In The Diversity of Life, Harvard entomologist, Edward O. Wilson
estimates that around 27,000 varieties of living organisms are lost every year. At current rates, he suggests about 20 percent of existing species including flora and fauna are sure to get extinct in the next 30 years, precipitating in evolutionary history “the sixth great extinction spasm” (17). He tries to establish the fact that human beings act as important agents in this process of destruction. The extravagant and wasteful lifestyle of humankind results in plundering and destruction of the earth. An unsustainable life style adopted by human beings is destroying their own existence. Glen A. Love in “Revaluing Nature: Towards An Ecological Criticism” very aptly quotes renowned English historian, Arnold Toynbee as:

. . . mankind now has the power to make the biosphere uninhabitable, and that it will, in fact, produce this suicidal result within a foreseeable period of time if the human population of the globe does not now take prompt and vigorous concerted action to check the pollution and the spoliation that are being inflicted upon the biosphere by short-sighted human greed. (225)

There are finite resources on earth, and the more that some limited portion of humankind uses, the less is available to others. Humans are actually derailing the human rationality by tampering with nature. They construct islands by destroying mountains; cut down forests and fill the seas with poison and garbage; clone pets but hunt down wild animals; build junkyards in the sky but bereft the sky of birds; accumulate junkyards in the sky but deplete the earth of its treasures; build golf courses in the desert but desertify the plains and so-on and so forth. Charles Hansford, an American poet very aptly maintains:

To strive with Nature little it avails.
Her favors to improve and nicely scan
Is all that is within the reach of Man.
Nature is to be follow’d, and not forc’d,
For, otherwise, our labor will be lost. (qtd. in Kolodny 175)
Cheryll Glotfelty, the first American professor of Literature and Environment in *The Ecocriticism Reader* points out that in our postmodern age, the profession of English literature must redraw the boundaries to remap the rapidly changing contours of literary studies. She maintains that the global environmental crisis is apparently ignored by scholars. She believes that the environmental problems are largely of our own making. She writes:

We have reached the age of environmental limits, a time when the consequences of human actions are damaging the planet’s basic life support systems. We are there. Either we change our ways or we face global catastrophe, destroying much beauty and exterminating countless fellow species in our headlong race to apocalypse. Many of us in colleges and universities worldwide find ourselves in a dilemma. Our temperaments and talents have deposited us in literature departments, but, as environmental problems compound, work as usual seems unconscionably frivolous. If we’re not part of the solution, we’re part of the problem. (xxi)

The preservation of nature has always been a prime concern since early times. As an academic discipline it began in earnest in the 1990s, although its origin goes back to late 1970s at the meeting of WLA (Western Literature Association). The works of William Bartram, Alexander Wilson, and John James Audubon illustrated the important contributions made by natural history writers during the early Romantic period. All the three writers helped to introduce a pattern of ecological thinking in American culture through emphasis upon a feeling of membership in a natural community. William Bartram’s *Travels* (1791) was a contribution of a person who was fully immersed in the experience of American wilderness. He was full of appreciation for the wonderful intricacy of natural systems and believed that everything manifested the divine and inimitable workmanship. His incisive observations celebrated the fabric of interrelationships that he recognized in the wilderness. Alexander Wilson inspired by the beauty and diversity of American birds, devoted his life to their study. He travelled many
thousand miles on foot in search of undiscovered species in his monumental *American Ornithology* (1808-29). He assumed very deliberately that his natural history was not a contribution to science only but to the cultural identity of the nation. His romantic narrative poem “The Forests” was about his twelve hundred mile foot journey to the falls of Nigeria. Both as an ornithologist and as a romantic poet, he responded to the unnoticed beauty of the American wilderness. In a way, he succeeded in combining his scientific and literary talents in order to record the national treasures of American birds. John James Audubon like Bartram and Wilson travelled thousands of wilderness miles in order to discover study and document native species. Audubon’s writing was characterized by the elements of early romanticism in America that represented affection for the picturesque in natural scenery, a powerful attraction to the American Sublime, an inclination for melodramatic sentimentality and a lurking interest in Native Americans. Through his prose and paintings, he brought forth the vanishing wilderness and lamented over the lost wilderness.

All the three writers celebrated their relationship with non-human nature, there by introducing the proto-ecological sensibility upon which further developments in the genre of natural history writing depended. Nineteenth century American naturalists and explorers are often credited by ecocritics as having initiated the conservation movement. Their work focused more on scientific descriptions and speculations about nature. However, many critics have shown that their writings were imbued with a poetic spirit. In Britain, in the nineteenth century, the Romantic poets reacted strongly against eighteenth century emphasis on reason and sought new ways of expressing their thoughts and feelings. Romanticism, in this regard, is an embodiment of the rudiments of Ecocriticism. The Romantic poets attempted to re-discover the mystery and wonder of the world, and tried to establish a meaningful relationship between literature and nature. To them, nature was the principal source of inspiration and spiritual enlightenment. William Wordsworth is considered to be the spokesman of the movement. He celebrates the beauty and mystery of nature in some of his most famous lyrics, including *Michael* (1800), which portrays a simple shepherd who is deeply
attached to the natural world around him. *The Excursion* (1814) is a long philosophical reflection on the relationship of humanity and nature. His autobiographical poem *The Prelude* (1850) records his evolving understanding of Nature. He viewed nature as a living entity endowed with feeling and purpose. The poetry of Coleridge, John Keats, Lord Byron and Percy Shelly also included emotional descriptions of the natural world and features some of the best known nature verse in English. Shelly’s *Ode to the West Wind* is called the most inspired lyrical poem describing nature in English language.

The Romantic interest in nature is particularly significant to ecocritics because these poets were revolutionary in their politics, and the preservation of the natural world was one of the most important elements of their radical thinking. A Romantic poet who used his understanding of nature to protest against the new capitalist machinery was John Claire, who unlike others was himself a labourer and worked on the land. In the novels of English writers of nineteenth century, like Thomas Hardy, the sense of place took centre stage. Mathew Arnold’s *Dover Beach* (1867) is said to offer one of the finest descriptions of place in English poetry. Victorian essayists, who wrote about nature included, John Ruskin and Thomas Carlyle. Both of them lamented the destruction of the environment due to industrialization.

Mary Austin’s *The Land of Little Rain* published in 1903, changed the people’s vision of deserts. She beautifully recorded her love for the strange and exotic desert of Southern California, and automatically people no longer see deserts as hostile and forbidding places. She strongly emphasized that it is impossible to understand humans without understanding their environment and the forces that have moulded them physically and mentally. She recognized an organic, interactive connection between humans and the rest of the biosphere. Aldo Leopold’s *A Sand County Almanac* published in 1949, asserts that all species have a right to exist as their biotic right. He urged human beings to be careful in their usage of non-human nature. He is considered the first bonafide Western environmental ethicist and the founding member of the wilderness society. Rachel
Carson’s *Silent Spring* published in 1962 disclosed the dangers of using pesticides. It provided scientific evidences to show that pesticides such as DDT, aldrin, dieldrin pose a serious threat both to wildlife and to human health. Edward Abbey’s *Desert Solitaire* published in 1968 talked about raw and unbridled beauty of the desert landscape. He opted for a political awareness so that wild nature could be defended. Annie Dillard’s *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* published in 1974, turned out to be a breakthrough book through its clear language, farsighted observation and metaphysical perspective in the field of eco-theological studies. Gary Snyder’s single volume book of poetry *Turtle Island* published in 1974 was an environmental declaration involving various aspects on social, political, aesthetic, personal, culture and spiritual level. Barry Lopez through his book *Arctic Dreams* published in 1986 asserted the importance of the place of the Arctic and lamented on the process of exploitation run on it. He advocated the dire need of intimacy with nature over the greed of wealth sought by exploiting nature.

The ideas and texts grown out of this period subsequently got consolidated into the field now known as Ecocriticism. As such, it is predicted that the individual literary and cultural scholars have been developing ecologically informed criticism and theory since very early but they have failed to organize themselves into an identifiable group. Their efforts have not been recognized as belonging to a distinct critical school or movement and have been categorized under different headings, “American Studies, regionalism, pastoralism, the frontier, human ecology, science and literature, nature in literature, landscape in literature, or the names of the authors treated” (Glotfelty xviii).

In the mid 1980s and early 90s, there has been a substantial growth in environmental literary studies. In 1985 Frederick O.Waage edited *Teaching Environmental Literature: Materials, Methods, Resources* which included course descriptions from nineteen different scholars and sought to consolidate a greater presence of environmental concern and awareness in literary disciplines. In 1989 Alicia Nitecki founded *The American Nature Writing Newsletter* with a purpose to publish brief essays and book reviews on nature and environment.
Glotfelty in 1989 at Western Literature Association conference revived the term “Ecocriticism” and urged its adoption to refer to the diffused critical field that was previously known by different names. It was in 1990s, the study of Literature and Environment grew rapidly. In 1991 MLA (Modern Language Association) special session was organized by Harold Fromm, entitled “Ecocriticism: The Greening of Literary Studies”. In 1992 at the annual meeting of the Western Literature Association, a new association for the study of literature and environment, ASLE was formed with Sott Slovic elected as its first president. The mission of ASLE was to promote ideas and information pertaining to literature that considered the relationship between human beings and the natural world and to encourage, “new nature writing, traditional and innovative scholarly approaches to environmental literature, and interdisciplinary environmental research” (Glotfelty xviii).

Many early works of Ecocriticism are characterized by an exclusive interest in Romantic Poetry, Wilderness Narrative and Nature Writing, but in the last few years ASLE has turned towards a more general culture ecocriticism, with studies of popular scientific writing, film, TV, art, architecture and other cultural artifacts such as theme parks, zoos, and shopping malls. In 1993, Patrick Murphy established a new journal ISLE (Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment) to, “provide a forum for critical studies of the literary and performing arts proceeding from or addressing environmental considerations. These would include ecological theory, environmentalism, conceptions of nature and their depictions, the human/ nature dichotomy and related concerns”(Glotfelty xviii). By 1993, Ecocriticism emerged as a recognizable critical school. The formerly scattered scholars joined forces with younger scholars to become a strong interesting group with aspirations to change the profession.

While ecocritics study literature written throughout history and analyze its relationship to the environment, most scholarship has focused on American and British literature from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Peter Barry in his essay “Ecocriticism” in The Beginning Theory asserts that Ecocriticism began in the United States of America in the late 1980s and as Green Study in the United
Kingdom in the early 1990s. Ecocriticism in the United States of America took its literary bearings from nineteenth century American writers whose work celebrated nature and the wilderness as manifested in America. They were Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882), Margaret Fuller (1810-1850) and Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862). All three were the members of the group of writers, essayists and philosophers collectively known as the Transcendentalists. A central theme of Transcendentalists is the idea that the complete human experience can only be achieved through the harmony with nature. The literary texts most closely associated with Transcendentalism include Emerson’s *Nature*, Thoreau’s *Walden* and Fuller’s *Summer on the Lakes*. Emerson’s first short book *Nature* (1836) is a reflective essay on the impact upon him of the natural world. Fuller expresses her relationship with the American Landscape in her book *Summer on the Lakes* (1843) and Thoreau’s *Walden* (1854) is an account of his two years stay in a hut he had built on the shore of Walden pond. Cheryll Glotfelty is the acknowledged founder of Ecocriticism in the United States of America.

According to Barry, the UK version of Ecocriticism generally known as Green Studies took its inspiration from British Romanticism of the late 1790s rather than American transcendentalism of the 1840s. The founding figure on the British side is the critic Jonathan Bate, author of *Romantic Ecology: Wordsworth and the Environmental Tradition* (1991). British ecocritics trace their history before the term Ecocriticism existed to Raymond William’s book *The Country and the City* (1973). The definitive UK collection of essays is Lawrence Coupe’s *The Green Studies Reader: From Romanticism to Ecocriticism* (2000). The preferred American term is “Ecocriticism” where as “Green Studies” is frequently used in the UK. The two variants are clearly linked in their approaches and aims but differ in emphasis and ancestry.

Ecocriticism is officially heralded by the publication of two seminal works both published in the mid-1990s: *The Ecocriticism Reader* edited by Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm, *The Environmental Imagination* by Lawrence Buell. In the beginning, the focus of Ecocriticism was very restrictive as it only included
Nature writing. Later, as it gained currency in the literary world, Ecocriticism began to include a multiplicity of approaches and subjects:

Under this broad and umbrella term environmental literature, nature writing, deep ecology, the ecology of cities, the literature of toxicity, environmental justice, bioregionalism, the lives of animals, the revaluation of place, interdisciplinary eco-theory have been added. (Sumathy 3)

It is a broad genre and is known by many names: Green Cultural Studies, Ecopoetics and Environmental Literary Criticism. The common ground on which all strands of Ecocriticism stand is the assumption that the interactions between human and their natural environment should help to resolve the ecological predicament.

Ecocriticism being a new field, different thinkers and critics have used the approach and mode variously and accordingly defined the term in different ways. However, their basic concerns being similar, the various approaches generally focus on the relationship between humans and the earth. Scott Slovic in, “Ecocriticism: Containing Multitudes, Practising Doctrine” maintains, “Ecocriticism has no central, dominant doctrine or theoretical apparatus—rather, eco-critical theory, such as it is, is being re-defined daily by the actual practice of thousands of literary scholars around the world” (161).

William Rueckert coined the term “Ecocriticism” in 1978 in an essay “Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism”. He writes that Ecocriticism entails “application of ecology and ecological concepts to the study of literature” (107). His definition includes all possible relations between literature and the physical world. Ernst Heinrich Haeckel, a German biologist and philosopher of evolution, used for the first time the term “ecology” in 1876. Ecology is a term derived from German ‘Oecologie’ meaning, “the branch of biology that deals with the relationships between living organisms and their environment” (Johnston 193). The etymology of the word ‘Ecology’ (oikos + logos) describes it as the knowledge of the household science. According to
Selvamony, “the oikos integrates the natural, the cultural and the sacred” (314). Therefore, ecology is not a binary relationship between an organism and the environment but is inclusive of the interrelationship among the environment, society and the individual. Thus an analysis of a text in terms of these three components is termed Oikocriticism—Ecocriticism or Oikopoetics—Ecopoetics. Ecocriticism is a term derived from Greek ‘oikos’ and ‘kritis’. Oikos means household and Kritis means judge, “an arbiter of taste who wants the house kept in good order” (Howarth 69). Glotfelty defines Ecocriticism as:

Simply put, Ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment. Just as feminist criticism examines language and literature from a gender-conscious perspective, and Marxist criticism brings an awareness of modes of production and economic class to its reading of texts, Ecocriticism takes an earth-centered approach to literary studies. (xviii)

In the Introduction of The Ecocriticism Reader, Glotfelty sets a wide scope of this critical approach. She reports, American historian, writer and environmentalist, Wallace Stegner who suggests that the subject of Ecocriticism, “remain large and loose and suggestive and open, simply literature and the environment and all the ways they interact and have interacted” (xxii). Ecocriticism widens its scope to genres other than nature writing, as long as the works examine ecological awareness. Glotfelty maintains, “nature per se is not the only focus of eco-critical studies of representation. Other topics include the frontier, animals, cities, specific geographical regions, rivers, mountains, deserts, Indians, technology, garbage, and the body” (xxiii).

Lawrence Buell pays greater attention to the emergent threat of ecological holocaust and sees environmental pressures as tending to increase the importance of pastoralism as a literary and cultural force in the future. In his book The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing and the Formation of American Culture (1995), he says “this study must be conducted in a spirit of
commitment to environmentalist praxis” (12). In this book, he prescribes the ingredients of an environmentally oriented work as:

(i) The nonhuman environment is present not merely as a framing device but as a presence that begins to suggest that human history is implicated in natural history. (ii) Human interest is not understood to be the only legitimate interest. (iii) Human accountability to the environment is a part of the text’s ethical orientation. (iv) Some sense of the environment as a process rather than as a constant or a given is at least implicit in the text. (7-8)

In some of the chapters of *The Environmental Imagination*, Buell re-evaluates many of the fundamental concepts of literary criticism from an ecocentric perspective. He goes to the root terms of literary analysis like representation, reference, metaphor, setting, characterization, personae and canonicity to presume that all these elements are dramatically transformed by an environmental perspective. Examining the possible relations between literature and nature and linking ecological contexts with literary criticism produce a variety of scholarly work. Some critics emphasize the importance of promoting a bio-centric worldview through ecocriticism and announce a call for cultural change. Michael P. Branch in the collection entitled *Reading the Earth: New Directions in the Study of Literature and the Environment* (1998) goes a bit further and is more specific in the matter of ethical commitment. He says:

Ecocriticism is not just a meaning of analyzing nature in literature; it implies a move towards a more bio-centric world-view, an extension of ethics, a broadening of human’s conception of global community to include non human life forms and the physical environment. Just as feminist and African American literary criticism call for a change in culture—that is, they attempt to move the culture towards a broader world-view by exposing an earlier narrowness of view—so too does ecological literary criticism advocate for cultural change by examining how the narrowness of
our culture’s assumptions about the natural world has limited our ability to envision an ecologically sustainable human society. (xiii)

Richard Kerridge’s definition in Writing the Environment: Ecocriticism and Literature (1998) suggests like Glotfelty’s broad cultural Ecocriticism that the ecocritics aim:

. . . to track environmental ideas and representations wherever they appear, to see more clearly a debate which seems to be taking place, often part-concealed, in a great many cultural spaces. Most of all Ecocriticism seeks to evaluate texts and ideas in terms of their coherence and usefulness as responses to environmental crisis. (5)

As a result, it can be said that texts which show an engagement with the world around can be eco-critically evaluated. Thus Ecocriticism or Environmental Criticism has considerably widened its net, from initial interest in non-fiction nature writing and nature poetry, to include genres such as Drama, Fiction, Documentary and Cinema.

In The Song of the Earth (2000), Jonathan Bate reflects over some fundamental questions about the purpose of literary criticism in a time of environmental crisis. He expresses the idea same as Glotfelty but more concisely. According to him, the aim of literature is to work upon consciousness. He believes that all of nature is our dwelling place. Nature is a great ecosystem of which humanity is a part. He writes:

A central question in environmental ethics is whether to regard human kind as part of nature or apart from nature. It is the task of literary ecocritics to address a local version of that question: What is the place of creative imagining and writing in the complex set of relationships between human kind and environment, between mind and world, between thinking, being and dwelling? (72-73)

Glen A. Love has been teaching and writing for years with the intention of bringing communication between the natural sciences and the humanities. He
points out that the great deal of world literature deals with the pastoral and with the relationship between the human and non-human. In his book *Practical Ecocriticism: Literature, Biology and the Environment* (2003), he maintains:

At the beginning of the third millennium and of a new century often heralded as ‘the century of the environment,’ a coherent and broadly based movement embracing literary environmental interconnections, commonly termed “Ecocriticism” is emerging … Ecocriticism, unlike all other forms of literary enquiry, encompasses non human as well as human contexts and considerations. On this claim, Ecocriticism bases its challenge to much postmodern critical discourse as well as to the critical systems of the past. (3)

According to Love, ecocritics are trying to read literature with a fresh sensitivity to the emergent voice of nature. He adds that this voice can only be expressed in literature through human representations of non-human creatures and landscapes. He further focuses on Ecocriticism as a multifarious approach. He observes the expansion of the scope of Ecocriticism:

What is emerging is a multiplicity of approaches and subjects, including-under the big tent of environmental literature-nature writing, deep ecology, the ecology of cities, ecofeminism, the literature of toxicity, environmental justice, bioregionalism, the lives of animals, the revaluation of place, interdisciplinarity, ecotheory, the expansion of the canon to include previously unheard voices, and the interpretations of canonical works from the past. (5)

Michael P. Branch and Scott Slovic in their introduction to the *ISLE Reader* (1993-2003) call Ecocriticism as, “the term now widely used to describe scholarship that is concerned with the environmental implications of literary texts” (xiv). They believe that every literary work can be read from a green perspective, and that linguistic, conceptual, and analytical frameworks developed in any non-literary discipline may be incorporated into an eco-critical reading. Slovic as such
maintains that any conceivable style of scholarship becomes a form of Ecocriticism if it is applied to certain kinds of literary works and affirms that no literary work defies eco-critical interpretation.

Robert Kern in his essay “Ecocriticism: What Is It Good For?” in The ISLE Reader (1993-2003) closely examines the assumption that all literary texts be read from an eco-critical point of view. According to him, Ecocriticism becomes most interesting and useful, when it aims to recover the environmental character or orientation of works who’s conscious or foregrounded interests lie elsewhere. As an example, he takes Jane Austen’s Pride and Prejudice to show what happens to this context when it is not read in its intended mode but in terms of its implied or unconscious orientation towards the environment. He specifies:

I am proposing both to assert and to test the assumption that all texts are at least potentially environmental (and therefore susceptible to Ecocriticism or ecologically informed reading) in the sense that all texts are literally or imaginatively situated in a place, and in the sense that their authors, consciously or not, inscribe within them a certain relation to their place. (259)

Kern clarifies the fact that Ecocriticism calls for a fundamental shift from one context of reading to another. It is specifically, a movement from the human to the environmental or from exclusively human to the bio-centric or ecocentric informed by an awareness of the more than human. He takes the idea a step further when he advocates eco-critical approach as:

. . . ecocriticism, ultimately a form of environmental advocacy, is primarily a critical and literary tool, a kind of reading designed to expose and facilitate analysis of a text’s orientation both to the world it imagines and to the world in which it takes shape, along with the conditions and contexts that affect that orientation, whatever it might be. (260)
Lawrence Buell further in *The Future of Environmental Criticism* (2005) defines Ecocriticism as, “the environmentally oriented study of literature and (less often) the arts more generally, and to the theories that underlie such critical practice” (138). He identifies two phases of Ecocriticism, the First wave ecocriticism and the Second wave ecocriticism. The First wave ecocriticism focuses on genres as “nature writing, nature poetry and wilderness fiction” (138). While the first wave ecocritics uphold the philosophy of organisms, the Second wave ecocritics are inclined towards Environmental justice issues and Social ecocriticism “that takes urban and degraded landscapes as seriously as natural landscapes” (28). In their contribution to *MELUS* 2009, Joni Adamson and Scott Slovic in “The Shoulders We Stand on: An Introduction to Ethnicity and Ecocriticism” claim that this engagement today includes, “all facets of human experience from environmental viewpoint” (5). As such, the Ecocriticism has gone beyond nature writing to analyze the built environments of urban landscapes. The shift has made ecocritics engage with various interconnected concerns like racism, maldevelopment, poverty, gender bias, gaiphobia, xenophobia etc. Greg Garrard in his book *Ecocriticism: The New Critical Idiom* (2012) defines it as “the study of the relationship of the human and the non-human, throughout human cultural history and entailing critical analysis of the term ‘human’ itself” (5).

The ideas and concepts from these collections provide varied pathways for developing Ecocriticism into an effective, competitive and innovative methodology in literary and cultural studies. These approaches immeasurably widen the reach of Ecocriticism. Glotfelty very rightly suggests, “Ecocriticism has been predominantly a white movement. It will become a multi-ethnic movement when stronger connections are made between the environment and issues of social justice, and when a diversity of voices are encouraged to contribute to the discussion” (xxv). As it is a new area of study, scholars are still engaged in defining the scope and aims of the subject. Ecocritics today work on many projects with an emphatic focus on the welfare of ecosystem.
**How Ecocriticism Differs from other Approaches**

Literary theories commonly examine the relations between writers, texts and the world. In most of the literary theories, the world is synonymous with society that includes the social sphere. Ecocriticism expands the notion of the world to include the entire ecosphere. We can say, it is a study that gradually shifts from inside to outside.

Ecocriticism continues to expand beyond its American beginnings, with work being done in Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Korea, Europe and India among others.

**A Brief Survey of Ecocriticism in India**

India is a country with variety of ecosystems ranging from the Himalayas in the north to plateaus of south and from the dynamic Sundarbans in the east to dry Thar of the west. These ecosystems have been adversely affected due to increasing population and avarice of humankind that results in depletion of natural resources. This depletion becomes a point of concern in literature. Ecology deals with the study of organisms in relation to their environment. It further deals with the study of the way in which plants, animals and people are related to each other and their environment forming a complex relationship. In this relationship, these entities become interdependent to such an extent that any disturbance in one leads to the disturbance of the other. History is replete with examples that prove that every change in the civilization results in the alteration of the relationship of nature and human beings. Therefore ecological concerns are one of the most important discussions nowadays. It is the concern of every country to replenish the diminishing factors of ecology which threatens human beings the most. The term “Ecocriticism” gets an impression of an entrant in Indian context. Nevertheless, there are number of treatises available where the roots of Ecocriticism can be traced. Late Indian Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi in a key note address to the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm in 1972, argues:
People who are at cross-purposes with nature are cynical about mankind and ill-at-ease with themselves. Modern man must re-establish an unbroken link with nature and with life. He must again learn to invoke the energy of growing things and to recognize, as did the ancients in India centuries ago, that one can take from the earth and the atmosphere only so much as one puts back in them. (qtd. in DeLoughrey and Handley 17)

In Indian panorama, nature is considered as an inevitable part of human life and custom but it is not been considered as a valued term in its textual form. However, various poets and authors present the peerless and perennial Indian landscape through their visual imagery and metaphorical language. There are few novels in the history of Indian English Literature which can be read through the lens of Ecocriticism. Raja Rao is one of the most prominent writers of Indian English novels. His depiction of the South Indian village culture and environment setting in his novel Kanthapura is a true depiction of relationship between human and nature. R. K. Narayan has given life to a place, Malgudi in most of his novels and short stories. He uses landscape as an important theme which is one of the important considerations under Ecocriticism.

Nature and human’s life are interlinked to such an extent that it is impossible for human beings to separate themselves from its influence. When humans intervene in nature’s activities, nature shows its power by controlling humanpower through natural calamities like cyclones, famine, drought, flood, earthquakes etc. Human beings are supposed to accept nature’s bounty and adversity. This is how the chain of ecosystem works in which everything is related to everything else as illustrated by the great ecologist Barry Commoner’s first law of ecology. Babbani Bhattacharya’s So Many Hungers shows the effect of a natural calamity on humanity. The novel depicts the true picture of Bengal famine of 1943 in which large number of Indians die of starvation and hunger. Kamla Markandya’s Nectar in sieve witnesses a reference to Bengal famine. This novel describes the control of nature over human beings. Ruskin Bond’s works not only
shows ecology as an important or dominant theme, but shows his concern for the unthoughtful actions of humans towards nature. Ecocriticism gives increased attention to literary representations of nature and is sensitive to interdependencies that ground the author, character or work in the natural system. This approach shifts critical focus from social relations towards natural relationships and views the individual as a member of ecosystem.

In the beginning ecocriticism was restricted to the works related to nature or to the works concerned with the relation of human with animals. Later, however, as it gained currency in the literary world, it received the attention of almost all the critics around the world. Its scope has become large. Postcolonial texts by authors such as Arundhati Roy, J.M. Coetzee, Jamaica Kincaid, Zadie Smith and Amitav Ghosh are equally important environmental works. The scope of this criticism widened because of the inclusion of the different perspectives proposed by the critics around the world. Many scholars have now joined the chorus seeking to describe, define, challenge, and extend the fertile and weedy field of ecocriticism. Glotfelty foresees:

In the future we can expect to see eco-critical scholarship becoming even more interdisciplinary, multicultural, and international. The interdisciplinary work is well underway and could be further facilitated by inviting experts from a wide range of disciplines to be guest speakers at literary conferences and by hosting more interdisciplinary conferences on environmental topics. Eco-criticism has been predominantly a white movement. It will become a multi-ethnic movement when stronger connections are made between the environment and issues of social justice, and when a diversity of voices is encouraged to contribute to the discussion. (xxv)

At present Ecocriticism is in full swing and is readily accepted theory worldwide. As suggested by Glotfelty in The Ecocriticism Reader, Ecocritics are concerned with the questions like, if the nature is being represented in a piece of literature or if the physical settings has a role in the plot or if the values expressed
in the work is consistent with the ecological wisdom or if in addition to race, class and gender place should become a new critical category and in what ways and to what extent the environment crises are seeping into contemporary literature and popular culture. It is in these areas, the literature is making a substantial contribution to environmental thinking.

As critics have pointed out, one of the reasons that Ecocriticism continues to grow as a discipline is the continued global environmental crisis. Its aim is to show how the works of writers concerned about the environment can play some part in solving real and pressing ecological concerns. Ecocriticism cannot be found only in English and literature departments, but also across all humanities departments, including Women’s Studies, History and Foreign Languages. Ecocritics can be found in Biology and Science departments as well. Anthropologists set up a connection between culture and geography. Psychologists are exploring the linkage between environmental conditions and the mental health. Some consider modern estrangements from nature as the basis of our social and psychological illness. In Philosophy, various subfields like Environmental Ethics, Deep Ecology, Ecofeminism and Social Ecology have emerged in an effort to understand and remedy the root causes of environmental degradation. The field of Ecocriticism is open to co-operation with other fields of research. The ultimate goal of Ecocriticism is to examine the moral implications of human interaction with nature, in the hope of preserving diminishing resources.

Amitav Ghosh is a leading postcolonial writer of present times and his works have been analyzed as illustrations of Postmodern, Postcolonial writing. But a close reading of his novels reveal a number of environmental concerns in almost all his works. Ghosh’s ecocentric vision is evident in his works as he visualizes the world as a composite, interconnected whole. Ghosh is one of the few Indian writers in English who constructs nature in his fictional works by using interweaving legends, experience, myth and history.

Ghosh was born in Calcutta on 11 July 1956. His father was a diplomat and former lieutenant colonel in the Indian army. As a consequence of his father’s
changing postings, he grew up in East Pakistan, Srilanka, Iran and India. His family originated from Eastern Bengal and migrated to Calcutta before partition in 1947. Ghosh went to the Doon school in Dehra Dun and received B.A in history from St. Stephens College Delhi in 1976. In 1978 he received an M.A in sociology from Delhi University. His doctorate completed in 1982 at Oxford University in social anthropology. He went to Tunisia to learn Arabic in 1979. In 1980, he conducted field works in Egypt for his doctorate. After completing his doctorate he worked as a journalist for *The Indian Express* in Delhi. Since then he has acted as visiting fellow and professor in several universities around the world.


Ghosh is the recipient of a number of awards for his published works. His first novel *The Circle of Reason* (1986) was translated into many languages. Its French edition received the Prix Medicis Estranger, a prestigious literary award in France. His second novel *The Shadow Lines* (1988) won two prestigious Indian prizes, the Kendra Sahitya Akademi Award (1989) and the Ananda Puraskar in 1990. His third novel *The Calcutta Chromosome* (1996) won the Arthur C. Clarke
Award in 1997. The novel was filmed by Gabriele Salvatores, the Oscar winning director of Mediteranno. Ghosh is the winner of the 1999 Pushcart prize, a leading literary award, for an essay “The March of the Novel” that was published in the Kenyon Review. His fourth novel The Glass Palace (2000) won the 2001 Frankfurt e-Book Award sponsored by the International eBook Award Foundation at the Frankfurt Book Fair in January 2005. The Hungry Tide (2004) was awarded the Hutch Crossword Book Prize, a major Indian award. He was awarded Padma Sri by the Government of India in 2007. Sea of Poppies won the 2008 Vodafone Crossword Book Award for fiction. It was shortlisted for the 2008 Man Booker Prize. It won 2008 British Book Design and Production Award. It also won the Indiaplaza Golden Quill Award for the best novel and Indiaplaza Golden Quill Popular Vote Award in 2009. It has further received the prestigious Tagore Literature Award, awarded by Sahitya Akademi in 2012. River of Smoke, the second part of Ibis triology was shortlisted for 2011 The Hindu Literary Prize. It was also shortlisted for the 2011 Man Asian Literary Prize and 2013 DSC Prize for South Asian Literature. NPR listed the book as one of the year’s best historical novel. His latest novel, the third part of Ibis triology, Flood of Fire was short listed for 2015 The Hindu Literary Prize.

Ghosh’s works have been translated into nineteen languages and he has served on the jury of the Locarno Film Festival, Switzerland and the Venice Film festival. More than receiving a host of honours and awards, he is deemed as sincere, significant, non-conformist and popular. He turned down the Commonwealth Writers Prize in 2001 because the prize only recognized the writers and writings in English. In ‘A Tribute Poem to Amitav Ghosh’ Vivekanand Jha, a great critic and Indian poet, describes Ghosh as:

An emblem of beauty and wisdom
Fresh perfection treads in tandem.
Even in the teeth of The Hungry Tide
The horse of success you ride.
Even in the Incendiary Circumstances
Your pen steadily advances.
Your destination knows no doubt and confusion
As you embarked journey upon *The Circle of Reason.*
Over your face, no trace of *The Shadow Lines*
Even at fifty-five you enjoy an age of prime.
Even In an Antique Land
Beat the ‘Magic-Realism’ band.
By emancipating women in *The Calcutta Chromosome*
Bring happiness in every hearth and home.
Even those you provide solace
Who pelt stones on *The Glass Palace.*
No colonialism, opium or coffee
Can ebb out the wave of *Sea of Poppies.*
Your creativity is spreading like a tree of oak
As now you have swummed across *River of Smoke.*
Least is being shortlisted for Man Booker Prize
You shall be basking in many more sun rise. (1-22)

Ghosh flourishes as an important personality in the domain of Indian writings in English. He has undertaken a variety of themes; his literary mission with two significant commitments—fictionalization of historical facts and figures, and expression of a concern over physical environment. In this context, Love rightly maintains, “Teaching and studying literature without reference to the natural conditions of the world and the basic ecological principles that underlie all life seems increasingly shortsighted, incongruous” (*Practical*, 16). Global issues such as environmental decline, partition, and marginal histories are found in abundance in Ghosh’s writings. Consciously or unconsciously it occurs probably due to his constant roundup in various places including India, Bangladesh, Srilanka, United Kingdom, Algeria, Egypt, Italy and the United states. The travel across boundaries and cultures is a preoccupation in almost all his works. Brinda Bose very aptly comments:
As he travels between cultures/lands that diasporas straddle (India/Bangladesh/England in The Shadow Lines; India/Egypt in In an Antique Land; India/ Burma/Malaya in The Glass Palace), the burden of India’s colonial past appears to weigh heavily on a migrant Post-colonial generation, and Ghosh seems to be constantly in search of that elusive epiphanic moment in which individuals may come to terms with their histories, thereby releasing themselves from the metaphoric and metaphorical burden of their condition. (17-18)

Amitav Ghosh is a leading postcolonial writer of present times and his works have been analyzed as illustrations of Postmodern, Postcolonial writing. But a close reading of his novels reveal a number of environmental concerns in almost all his works. Ghosh’s ecocentric vision is evident in his works as he visualizes the world as a composite, interconnected whole. Ghosh is one of the few Indian writers in English who constructs nature in his fictional works by using interweaving legends, experience, myth and history.

Ghosh’s novels transcend the barriers of time and space and demonstrate the historical changes consequent upon the colonization. The effect of these changes on human and non-human world in terms of their relationship with each other is a recurring motif in his novels. Ghosh’s writings deal in the epic themes of travel and diaspora, history, memory, political struggle and communal violence, love and loss. The blend of history and fiction and the consequent impact in terms of transcending barriers in time and space (geography) leaves scope for establishing interdisciplinary readings to Ghosh’s novels.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A critical review of Ecocriticism and Amitav Ghosh’s works stimulate a kaleidoscope of diversified opinions.

In “Skepticism and Historicism in Amitav Ghosh’s Sea of Poppies” (2014) Anita Sharma writes that Amitav Ghosh is a writer concerned with India’s place in larger international cultural networks. His fiction seems directly informed by
contemporary academic debates about historical as well as anthropological elements.

Nesha Sabar in an essay, “Ecocritical Readings and Descriptions of Landscape in Amitav Ghosh’s *Sea of Poppies* and *River of Smoke*” (2014) writes that Ghosh is a contemporary Indian writer, whose most of the works deal with historical narratives mingling with geography, voyages, trade adventures, magic, memory and multiple points of view in the context of Indian Ocean.

Shivani Jha in “Ecocriticism and Ecocritical Interpretations of Selected Recent Indian Writings in English” (2014) views that Ghosh’s *The Hungry Tide* becomes an ecocritical testament that shows the path towards the desired equilibrium between the human and the non-human world.

Dinesh Kumar in “Across the Cultural Borders: Journeys, Mobility and Migration in Amitav Ghosh’s *The Hungry Tide*” (2013) remarks that Ghosh’s novels are marked with journeys, visits and human movements across time and space. According to him *The Hungry Tide* is a novel which emphasizes not only crossing the land but also crossing of water bodies at different places.

Vandana Rajoriya in “The Zest for Life and Struggle for Existence in *The Glass Palace* by Amitav Ghosh” (2013) views that *The Glass Palace* not only grasps the reach and fall of empires across the twentieth century but also maps with unerring skill of the rival geography of human heart.

Ch. Swathi in “Socio-politico-historical Documentation: A Study of Amitav Ghosh’s *Sea of Poppies*” (2013) views that *Sea of Poppies* is an epitome of realistic depiction set in the period of Opium wars, where history forms the backdrop against which the lives of the unfortunates are depicted quite realistically.

Vivekanand Jha in “Dominant Imageries in Amitav Ghosh’s *River of Smoke*” (2013) views that *River of Smoke* is a milestone and epoch-making historical novel in the history of Indian fiction which makes the readers reminisce the bruised and pleasant past and their perpetuating repercussion even in the
present. He further adds that the novel is not only a source of enjoyments and
endearments but also a fountain of inspiration, perspiration and learning.

Ravi Bhushan and Ms Daisy in “Deconstructing Human Society: An
Appreciation of Amitav Ghosh’s Sea of Poppies” (2010) writes that the novel has
been received favourably by the Booker jury for the compelling story told against
an epic historical canvas. They view it as a stunningly vibrant and intensely human
work that confirms Ghosh’s reputation as a master storyteller.

Amapurna Rath and Milind Malshe in “Chronotopes of “Places” and “Non-
Places”: Ecopoetics of Amitav Ghosh’s The Hungry Tide” (2010) writes that the
corpus of Ghosh’s fiction expands while panning through wide-angle lenses of
themes. The Hungry Tide is a unique combination of anthropology, migration,
travel, environmentalism, ethnography, photography and landscape wrapped under
the cloak of fiction.

U. Sumathy in “Bioregionalism in Amitav Ghosh’s The Hungry Tide”
(2009) writes that Amitav Ghosh in The Hungry Tide presents the biotic life in
Sundarbans which is essentially a bioregion that is not only defined by natural
markers but also by a domain of consciousness.

Divya Anand in “Words on Water: Nature and Agency in Amitav Ghosh’s
The Hungry Tide” (2008) remarks that The Hungry Tide raises national and global
awareness about the history of violence inscribed on the Sundarbans, throwing into
relief the continued exploitation of the place.

Rajinder Kaur in “Home is Where the Oracella are: Towards a New
Paradigm of Transcultural Ecocritical Engagement in Amitav Ghosh’s The Hungry
Tide” (2007) describes The Hungry Tide as a novel which tries to connect local
with global, past with present and the scientific with the mythic, overcoming the
differences in race, caste and class.

Alexa Weik in “The Home, the Tide, and the World: Eco-cosmopolitan
Encounters in Amitav Ghosh’s The Hungry Tide” (2007) describes that The
Hungry Tide helps us to understand the fascinating and sensitive ecology of the
tide country. He further views it as a story about environmental and social injustice in a postcolonial space.


In “American Literary Environmentalism as Domestic Orientalism” (2000) David Mazel declares that Ecocriticism is the analysis of literature as though nature mattered. This study, it is argued, can’t be performed without a keen understanding of the environmental crisis of modern times.

The main objective of this research thesis is to attempt an eco-critical analysis of the selected novels of Amitav Ghosh. Ecocriticism has captured the attention of many scholars over the last three decades. It explores how authors represent the interaction of both the human and non-human voices. Scot Slovic in “Nature Writing and Environmental Psychology” quotes Glotfelty, “it is the responsibility of critics and teachers to point out the environmental implications of literary texts, to engage in ‘ecocriticism’” (364). Ghosh has tried to develop an ecological poetics by applying ecological concepts to the reading, teaching, and writing about literature. The present thesis undertakes to study the selected novels of Ghosh under the main concerns of Ecocriticism like Deep Ecology, Social Ecology, Environmental Justice, Ecological Imperialism and Ecocide. So it is pertinent to describe these concerns of Ecocriticism in detail.
Deep Ecology

Deep Ecology proposes new norms of human responsibility to change the human exploitation of nature into co-participation with nature. Some of the main deep ecologists are: Arne Naess, Gary Synder, Bill Devall, George Sessions and Warwick Fox. The Poet Laureate of deep ecology is Gary Synder and his philosophical guru is a Norwegian philosopher and mountaineer Arne Naess. In 1973, Naess introduced the phrase ‘deep ecology’ to environmental literature in a famous article “The Shallow and the Deep, Long- Range Ecology Movement: A Summary”. Naess holds European and North American civilization responsible for the arrogance of its anthropocentric nature. He contrasts his new deep or radical ecological world view with the dominant shallow paradigm. He finds the shallow worldview typical of mainstream environmentalism that is an extension of European and North American anthropocentrism. He assumes that their reason for conserving wilderness and preserving biodiversity are invariably tied to human welfare. Naess and George Sessions sets out eight key points of the deep ecology platform, illustrated in “The Deep Ecological Movement” as:

1. The well being and flourishing of human and nonhuman life on earth have value in themselves (synonyms: intrinsic value, inherent value). These values are independent of the usefulness of the nonhuman world for human purposes.

2. Richness and diversity of life forms contribute to the realization of these values and are also values in themselves.

3. Humans have no right to reduce this richness and diversity except to satisfy vital human needs.

4. The flourishing of human life and cultures is compatible with a substantial decrease of the human population. The flourishing of nonhuman life requires such a decrease.

5. Present human interference with the non human world is excessive, and the situation is rapidly worsening.
6. Policies must therefore be changed. These policies affect basic economic, technological and ideological structures. The resulting state of affairs will be deeply different from the present.

7. The ideological change is mainly that of appreciating life quality (dwelling in situations of inherent value) rather than adhering to an increasingly higher standard of living. There will be a profound awareness of the difference between big and great.

8. Those who subscribe to the forgoing points have an obligation directly or indirectly to try to implement the necessary changes. (28)

These principles can be summarized into three simple points:

1. Wilderness preservation.

2. Human population control.


Deep ecologists believe that nature possesses the same moral standing and natural rights as human beings. They propose a respect not only for all life forms but also towards landscapes such as rivers and mountains. We can say that the norms of deep ecology are:

(i) Fundamental interconnectedness of all life forms and natural features.

(ii) Biocentric equality which affirms the equality of all things in the biosphere.

**Environmental Justice**

The origin of the Environmental Justice movement can be traced back to the United States Civil Rights Act of 1964. The movement reached a new level with the emergence of Robert Bullard’s work entitled *Dumping in Dixie* in the 1990s. Proponents of Environmental Justice are primarily concerned with the impact of an unhealthy environment thrust upon a collective body of life, entailing both human and non-human existence. Environmental Justice takes up issues of racism and socio-economic injustice. This movement has heightened concern not
only for human existence but also for animals and plant life. US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) describes Environmental Justice as:

In sum, environmental justice is the goal to be achieved for all communities and persons across this Nation. Environmental justice is achieved when everyone, regardless of race, culture, or income, enjoys the same degree of protection from environmental and health hazards and equal access to the decision-making process to have a healthy environment in which to live, learn, and work. (qtd. in Sandler and Pezzullo 29)

In 1991, at the First National People of Color Leadership Summit meeting in Washington D.C., the principles of Environmental Justice were adopted. Ronald Sandler and Phaedra Pezullo outline these principles as:

1. Environmental justice affirms the sacredness of Mother Earth, ecological unity and the interdependence of all species, and the right to be free from ecological destruction.

2. Environmental justice demands that public policy be based on mutual respect and justice for all people, free from any form of discrimination or bias.

3. Environmental justice mandates the right to ethical, balanced and responsible uses of land and renewable resources in the interest of a sustainable planet for humans and other living things.

4. Environmental justice calls for universal protection from nuclear testing, extraction, production and disposal of toxic/hazardous wastes and poisons and nuclear testing that threaten the fundamental right to clean air, land, water, and food.

5. Environmental justice affirms the fundamental right to political, economic, cultural and environmental self-determination of all people.
6. Environmental justice demands the cessation of the production of all toxins, hazardous wastes, and radioactive materials, and that all past and current producers be held strictly accountable to the people for detoxification and the containment at the point of production.

7. Environmental justice demands the right to participate as equal partners at every level of decision-making including needs assessment, planning, implementation, enforcement and evaluation.

8. Environmental justice affirms the right of all workers to a safe and healthy work environment, without being forced to choose between an unsafe livelihood and unemployment. It also affirms the right of those who work at home to be free from environmental hazards.

9. Environmental justice protects the right of victims of environmental injustice to receive full compensation and reparations for damages as well as quality health care.


12. Environmental justice affirms the need of urban and rural ecological policies to clean up and rebuild our cities and rural areas in balance with nature, honoring the cultural integrity of all our communities, and providing fair access for all to the full range of resources.

13. Environmental justice calls for the strict enforcement of principles of informed consent, and a halt to the testing of experimental reproductive and medical procedures and vaccinations on people of color.
14. Environmental justice opposes the destructive operations of multi-national corporations.

15. Environmental justice opposes military occupation, repression and exploitation of lands, peoples and cultures, and other life forms.

16. Environmental justice calls for the education of present and future generations, which emphasizes social and environmental issues, based on our experience and an appreciation of our diverse cultural perspectives.

17. Environmental justice requires that we, as individuals, make personal and consumer choices to consume as little of Mother Earth’s resources and to produce as little waste as possible; and make the conscious decision to challenge and reprioritize our lifestyles to ensure the health of the natural world for present and future generations. (321-23)

**Social Ecology**

Social Ecology as a critical theory was founded by green author and political philosopher, Murray Bookchin. It locates the roots of the ecological crisis firmly in relation of hierarchy and domination among people. It means that social and environmental problems are intertwined. Donald Davis, a professor of Sociology at Dalton State College views that the central tenet of Social Ecology is that it “integrates the study of human and natural ecosystems through understanding the interrelationships of culture and nature” (35). As such social ecologists opine that social, political, economic decisions made by humans affect our interaction with the environment. Human beings achieve self realization through participation in a creative and non-dominating human community. Social ecologists believe that environmental problems are not caused by anthropocentric attitudes alone, but follow from systems of domination or exploitation of humans by other humans. In *The Ecology of Freedom* (1982) Bookchin writes, “The domination of nature by man stems from the very real domination of human by human” (1). So it focuses on intra species relationships. They promote a decentralized society of non-hierarchal affiliations. They oppose power relations.

The core principle of Social Ecology is that ecological problems arise from deep
seated social problems. Ecological problems can not be understood and resolved without facing social issues. According to social ecologists, the root causes of environmental problems are such as trade for profit, industrial expansion, and the identification of progress with corporate self-interest. So social ecologists bring forth the concept of ecological society. In place of the existing hierarchical and class system, social ecology proposes an egalitarian or ecological society based on mutual aid, caring and communitarian values. Members of this new society would appreciate that the interests of the collective are inseparable from those of each individual. They believe that as such, property would be shared and ideally belong to the community as a whole. In this community, property would not belong to private producers or to a nation-state. This transformation is to be achieved through radical collective action and co-operative social movements.

**Ecological Imperialism**

Ecological Imperialism concerns the devastating and adverse effects of imperialism on the colonized ecologies apart from the devastating effects on colonized communities. The term ‘Ecological Imperialism’ was coined by Alfred Crosby. It refers to, “the violent appropriation of indigenous land to the ill-considered introduction of non-domestic livestock and European agricultural practices” (Huggan and Tiffan 3). Another form of ecological imperialism goes under the term “biocolonization” used by a variety of environmental and bioscientific scholars that refers to the current western technological experiments which include western-patented genetic modification and biotechnological suprematism for serving the western needs and political ends. “Environmental racism” is a third form of ecological imperialism. Deane Curtin, the American environmental philosopher defines it as, “the connection, in theory and practice, of race and the environment so that the oppression of one is connected to, and supported by, the oppression of the other” (qtd. in Huggan and Tiffan 4). It is a sociological phenomenon dealing with environmentally discriminatory treatment of socially marginalized or economically disadvantaged people.
Ecocide

Ecocide commonly referred to as ecological disaster is a major concern of Ecocriticism. It can be man-made or natural. The term was coined by Arthur W. Galeston in 1970 at the conference on “War and National Responsibility” in Washington to describe the attacks from military resources, such as the use of chemical defoliants in Vietnam. In the present times, similar levels of harm are more routinely caused in the name of development and search for cheap resources. All the nature writers and ecocritics stand firmly against Ecocide. Polly Higgins, a legal scholar and international environmental activist in her book *Eradicating Ecocide* defines Ecocide as, “the extensive destruction, damage to or loss of ecosystem(s) of a given territory, whether by human agency or by other causes, to such an extent that the peaceful enjoyment by the inhabitants of that territory has been severely diminished” (63). She views ecocide as a potential fifth international crime, after genocide, the crime of aggression, crimes against humanity and grave war crimes.

Ecocritics believe human beings are much responsible for the destruction of nature. As such, the primary aim of ecocritics is to protect the earth from any kind of disaster. The subsequent chapters in the present study show Ecocriticism provides different insights into Amitav Ghosh’s selected novels. The study is an attempt to provide a broader perspective of Ghosh’s selected novels by adding an ecological dimension to it.

Ghosh’s novel *The Glass Palace* (2000) brings together history and fiction. The narrative wraps around historical events like Britain’s invasion of Burma, Japan’s victory over Russia and the start of Europe’s decline, The first World War, the National Independence movement of the 1920’s and 30’s and the dramatic changes wrought by World War II. While connecting the lives of his characters to these historical events, Ghosh narrates the struggle of native people to assimilate with the culture imposed by an invading government. The novel describes the ecological devastation done by European intervention in South Asia. It highlights the extent of environmental damage caused to the earth on account of
colonialism and wars. Burma is rich in teak forests and the people are incredulous about a war over wood. Britishers declare war on Burma for sake of teak and other natural resources and results in the shattering of its kingdom. The king and the Queen along with their entourage of attendants are forced to leave the palace and their country. Rajkumar, an eleven year old orphan Indian boy, who accidently reaches Burma represents the human will to survive. He goes to work for his friend and mentor, Saya John in the teak industry in Burma, and eventually creates a kind of empire of his own. He becomes a comprador to the Britishers and engages himself in incessant logging down of forests and in transporting indentured labourers from India to Burma to work in plantations and natural resource extraction sites. The issue of change of habitat shows that humans are different from other living beings. Nature and landscape is directly endangered by the change of habitat. Humans are much more mobile and their continual quest for something firm and whole is demonstrated by their participation in other cultures and people. Boundaries and geographical bounds get erased and cultures merge. Nature under these circumstances becomes a cultural construct.

Ghosh’s other novel *The Hungry Tide* (2004) is set in one of the most fascinating regions on the earth—immense labyrinth of tiny islands known as the Sundarbans. Ghosh skillfully weaves a conscientious subject as the conservation of tigers, the dolphins and the fish of the Sundarbans. Through the fictionalized characters, Ghosh posits urgent questions about humankind’s place in nature in a drama of love and survival. The treatment of natural and geographical surroundings in Ghosh’s *The Hungry Tide* is a realistic handling of the subject. In the novel the life of people in Sundarbans and nature is weaved together to such a great extent that the inhabitants are forced to accept and settle in co-existence with killer waves, tigers, crocodiles and numerous natural catastrophes. Nature is both destroyer and preserver. For the inhabitants of the islands, nature is a bountiful mother as well as a hostile force. The nobler aspects of nature are represented by the river dolphins, crabs and glow worms. Ghosh beautifully examines the landscape, the flora, the fauna and the people who inhabit the Sundarbans. It further offers geographical blending of human and natural ecosystem involving
characters from Delhi, Bangladesh and the USA. Nature features as the chief protagonist of this work. In the novel, proximity of human beings with nature is set with historical past dealing with India’s independence of 1947 and partition of India. The novel is a clear cut notion about a troubling issue of conflict between environmentalists and humanists. Environmentalists hold their efforts for the protection of wildlife without any regard for the human costs. As such novel acknowledges the immense difficulties inherent in sharing of planet. In a way, Ghosh in the novel tries to link ecosystems, cultures and regions.

*Sea of Poppies* (2008) by Ghosh is set prior to the Opium Wars on the banks of the holy river Ganges in Calcutta. He portrays the characters as poppy seeds springing out in large numbers from the field to form a sea, where every single seed is ambiguous about its future. The novel is an account of an imposed opium monoculture in Bihar and Calcutta for the Chinese market responsible for the enormous wealth of British. It highlights how the fate of natives in this hinterland is written by poppy flowers. This forced cultivation of the only crop becomes the only source of income of the inhabitants. Agricultural production is forced to change from staple wheat, pulses and other food items to the cultivation of opium. Ghosh subtly explains the role that colonial powers play in the opium trade. This forced monoculture of poppies leads to the physical subjugations and ruins lives of farmers, local poor factory workers and ultimately alters and disturbs the ecosystems of the periphery. Ghosh highlights the condition of natives, humans as well as non-humans and shows how this monoculture is working against the natural laws according to which ecosystems work. Here pollution becomes an ecological problem created deliberately by the intervention of British imposed monoculture. The imposed monoculture and the relationship of human characters with the imposed natural world envisage eco-critical reading of the novel.

Ghosh in *River of Smoke* (2011) gives the description of the nineteenth century Asian subcontinent with creative enthusiasm and deep historical insight. The novel is a historical background to the European exploitation of India and China particularly. It details Opium Wars of 1839-42. The most obvious aspect of
the novel is the illegal sale of opium in China. Ghosh presents various characters in the novel—migrants, lascars, traders, government officials, British officials, businessmen, botanists, horticulturalists, boatmen and even painters. In the novel the members of the chamber of commerce including Mr Lancelot Dent, Mr Slide, Burnham, Captain Elliot, Mr Jarden, Mr Innes, other foreign opium merchants, an Indian opium merchant Bahram Modi and a British naturalist Mr Penrose are shown as characters who exploit nature. In contrast to the characters that have power and exploit nature, there is a circle of people who idealize and worship nature. It includes Commissioner Lin, Paulette and her father Pierre Lambert, King Charles, Robin Chinnery and Ah Fay. Through the fictionalized characters of the novel, Ghosh presents myriads of deep ecological, social ecological and ethic illumination and thoughts in pursuit of the ecological balance between nature and human beings.