Chapter 4

Simulating the Rhythms of Nature: A Study of Selected Nature Novels

“अयं बन्धु यं नेतिगणनालघु चेतसं उदारचरितानां तु वसुधैव कुटुम्बकं”

(ayam bandhurayam neti ganana laghuchetasam,

udaracharitanam tu vasudhaiva kutumbakam)

One is a relative, the other stranger,
say the small minded.
The entire world is a family,
live the magnanimous.
Be detached,
be magnanimous,
lift up your mind, enjoy
the fruit of Brahmanic freedom.

– Maha Upanishad 6.71–75

This quote, taken from the Maha Upanishad of the Hindu scriptures, is a clear identification of the oneness of the whole world. The phrase ‘vasudhaiva kutumbakam’ denotes that the entire world is but one single family. Etymologically, ‘vasudha’ means Earth, ‘ēva’ means ‘indeed’ or ‘is’ and ‘kutumbakam’ means ‘family’ suggesting that the whole Earth is a family; and that all beings that exist on the Earth are related to one another. When this realization dawns upon each and every mind, it leads to the beginning of a new era of peace, love and compassion, and the building of a new society based upon the three ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity.

After the envisioning of a utopian yet an illusory world where everything seems to be in a perfect harmony with Nature, no desire is
felt to return to absolute reality where culture seems predominant to Nature, stifling it beneath indiscriminate growth, lopsided policies, issues such as pollution and population explosion. The environment that the people of this Earth inhabit today is no longer safe for leading a healthy life. The irony here is that people desire a utopian society which is miles away from reality. The dystopian world never allows anyone to realize the dream of a perfect world with a paradise-like environment. However, if the society makes some efforts and takes necessary measures to check the defaulters who work against Nature damaging and exploiting it through foul deeds then there lies a possibility for establishing an ecological society.

Living a dream seems impossible but living it like a reality by changing, modifying, shaping and re-shaping it in the modes of genuine existence through collected efforts and endeavors could become a probable fact. So dreaming about establishing a Utopian state is possible only if required efforts are made to bring it to reality however impossible it may appear. It could be achieved through consolidated and collective effort of a people belonging either to a particular society or a nation that want a decisive positive change around them. When a society is marred by devastating forces and becomes aware of the imminent dangers, it must surge into desired action towards mitigating those threats by employing best possible methods. This is one of the ethical ways that one must adopt towards one’s environment if any element of danger seeps into it.

Literature acts as a potent medium to reflect and cogitate on these concerns through works of ecological awareness. In the field of literature, the authors have imagined two very distinctive kinds of worlds: the utopian and the dystopian. While utopia describes a perfect society that is developed on a purely egalitarian vision that seeks equal rights for everyone in all areas of life. Whereas dystopia reflects an oppressive society ruled under a repressive or controlled state by some evil or ruthless authority. There are certain fictional
works like Plato’s *Republic* (c. 380 BC) and Thomas More’s *Utopia* (1516) that either describe some of the few utopian tendencies or depict full-blown fictional worlds or societies based on utopian principles. The concept of Utopia can be traced back in the early era of 380 BC when Plato wrote his *Republic*, an influential political treatise in the form of dialogues between Socrates and other Athenians and foreigners. The conversations between Socrates and other characters revolve around the discussion of the characteristics of good and bad cities. This work can be considered as utopia not only for the state of the state but also of individuals, it describes the conditions that are necessary for the growth of both the individual and the cities. The work is a reflection of the “dissatisfaction of a fine and powerful mind, living in the bright light of that small, intelligent, Athenian community, at the failure of men to achieve justice, at the success of the demagogue and despot over the reasonable men, their betters” (Wells, *Utopias: Radio Broadcast*). The utopian image or idea in literature deals with the modern day problems of the society. The utopian writers take up contemporary issues, ills and troubles of their society as the basis for their writing. The difficulty of conjoining justice with freedom and good governance is one of the troubles that the nation-states are more likely to face among others like the dissensions between parties, creeds, classes, movements, and nations today. The similar circumstance can be observed in the Greek democracy, 22 centuries ago when Plato discovered a key to this dilemma in the Philosopher king, who should rule when he turns 35 upto 50 years of age. After that he must depart to the Islands of the Blest where he would receive honour and would display his wisdom for all the rest of his days. The modern utopias, however slightly differ from what Plato propagates in his *Republic*. For example, Thomas More’s *Utopia* (1516) is an ironic projection of the utopian ideals as propagated by Plato’s *Republic*, and moreover, it is also a critique of the social and political ills present in England at that time. The book describes a fictional society based on the principles of the three basic ideals of a perfect society namely, Liberty, Equality and
Fraternity. It is a frame narrative primarily depicting the social, religious and economic conditions and customs of the nowhere land of the Utopians. This work features Thomas More himself who mixes the narration of both his real feats with his fictive experiences. Raphael Hythloday is the fictional character in the book, shown as a compatriot of Amerigo Vespucci who was the first to discover America. *Utopia* is composed in two books, while in Book I, More illustrates the ills and flaws of certain governments in Europe, the second book describes the land of utopia where everything is in its perfect state.

While Plato’s *Republic* and Thomas More’s *Utopia* are the examples of Socialist utopias, Francis Bacon’s *New Atlantis* (1627) is considered as one of the greatest scientific utopias. It is an incomplete work in which Bacon portrays a vision for future scientific research and discovery, it proposes ideals for mankind to put their minds and knowledge in order to gain power and prosperity in society. The work tells a story of a fictional place, Bensalem that is not ruled by any king but like Plato’s Philosopher king, scientific philosophy rules this utopian world of Bacon. This utopia also presents an ideal image of a college in Saloman’s House that envisions a plan for a modern scientific research university in pure and applied sciences. This is a state-sponsored university that conducts experiments by applying Baconian methods to gather an empirical knowledge of the Nature and natural objects. The main aim of these scientific experiments is to gain an understanding of Nature to control and conquer it and put it to human use for the betterment of the society. According to Whitney, “As evident in New Atlantis, Bacon essentially foresees no limit to man’s ability to control his own fate through the domination of Nature. He presents us with a technological society that seemingly knows neither death nor disorder—in other words, heaven on Earth” (3). In Bacon’s scientific utopia, human beings don’t rely on their fate to provide them with the possibility of better living conditions but for them science does it all.
Through their knowledge of the science they can transform and manipulate the natural world for their own material benefits. In the book, Bacon describes how Nature is exhausted for human use, for experimentation and scientific research. For example, “large and various orchards and gardens” (Bacon NA 179) are kept not to respect their beauty but to change their aspects through the methods of inoculating and grafting. Various kinds of beasts and birds are kept in parks and enclosures not only for amusement but for dissections and trials for the medical treatment of certain conditions in human beings.

H. G. Wells’ novels are also characterized by utopian ideals and scientific philosophy who wrote during the Victorian era, for example, his novel *A Modern Utopia* (1905) modeled on Plato’s *Republic*, seems to be entirely based on pure utopian ideals. It depicts a modern society built on some other planet looking similar to the Earth in all its biological features inhabited by human beings. In the novel, the world state, that covers this Earth-like planet, is ruled by the Samurai, a voluntary group of nobility. The people are prohibited to consume any kind of drugs and alcoholic drinks; there is also a ban on meat-eating for the sake of cleanliness. It is mandatory for the people to take solitary walk in the wilderness regions for one week every year. Similarly, his novel *Men like Gods* (1923) also features same kind of a utopian society that is built on an advanced Earth in a parallel universe which is guided by the principles of education and liberty. In William Morris’s romantic novel, *News from Nowhere* (1891), he describes an ecological utopia where the society is founded on a small-scale human craftsmanship. The author applauds certain features of this utopian community such as decentralization, cooperative community, social equality, ecological well-being and individual freedom. The work depicts a society in which the preservation of Nature links with the aestheticization of the natural world. Ebenezer Howard’s *Garden Cities of To-morrow* (1898) provides another account of sustainable communities showcasing human artistry. The work can be considered as the blueprint of utopia
that characterizes beautiful architectural and horticultural designs to decorate the whole town and country. Aldous Huxley, who is best known for his tragic novel, *Brave New World*, has additionally composed an idealistic novel *Island* (1962) that depicts an eco-oriented group of people looking for ecological harmony through the improvement of spiritual consciousness with the assistance of meditation and non-addictive drugs. Ernest Callenbach’s *Ecotopia: A Novel* (1975) delineates a secessionist country of the 21st-century northwestern United States where the eco-sensitive people carry on with a decentralized, libertarian life near Nature. It depicts an ecologically sustainable society. In Ecotopia, all life is governed by the principles of steady-state economy, egalitarianism, environmental ethics and sexual liberation.

The Utopian image of a perfect society has also been exhibited in other literatures too. For example, in Indian literature, the portrayal of Ram Rajya in Valmiki’s *Ramayana* (written around 6th or 11th century CE) bears semblance to the utopian image manifested in Plato’s *Republic*. In *Ramayana*, the author provides a majestic description of *Rama Rajya* that reflected the utopian ideals of peace, prosperity, equality and liberty. Rama Rajya, which means the Reign of Lord Rama, is the capital city of Ayodhya, the birthplace of Lord Rama. This *Rama Rajya* however is characterized by democratic rule where people have every right to live happily and sustainably. According to Amil Shori, ‘Rama Rajya’ meant that “the state (Rajya) was the sole legitimate agency wielding power (force), which imposes limits upon its exercise of power, either for the greater happiness of the people, or to evade a greater tyranny that could be caused by moral outrage or self-righteousness”. This concept of *Rama Rajya* has been first evoked by Mahatma Gandhi depicting its ideals in his *Hind Swaraj*. Thoreau’s *Walden* (1854) has created a huge impact on Gandhiji’s thoughts about a perfect society. Henry David Thoreau published *Walden, or a Life in the Woods* in 1854. In this paean to the simple life, personal freedom is the foremost concern. However, it is
a particular sort of liberty that Thoreau advocates. For Thoreau, the freedom to live luxuriously generally leads to lives fettered to production, consumption, and accumulation. Thoreau’s remedy is an unadorned life that mimics natural rhythms and liberally imbibes the “tonic of wildness” (Thoreau 354). For Thoreau, the ideal is not the cloistered communitarian but the noble savage.

Mahatma Gandhi’s *Hind Swaraj* (1909), a political satire on colonial India can also be treated as a manifestation of utopian ideology as he talks of an ideal nation-state built on the mechanism of democratic-social model based on the ideals of *satya* (truth), *ahimsa* (non-violence) and *satyagraha* (combination of reason, morality and politics). In this book, he has led a revolt against the ills of modernity. Most of his ideas in *Hind Swaraj* are inspired by the views of Thoreau, Leo Tolstoy, Emerson and other writers, besides the masters of Indian Philosophy.

On the contrary, this perfect image of the world has also provided the writers with an alternate worldview that disregards the ideal state in favour of the representation of the sadistic world regarded as dystopia. The dystopia is set in imagined future, narrating unpleasant and evil happenings. The dystopian works are mostly characterized by draconian world, dehumanization, totalitarian rule, and environmental disaster or some other cataclysmic occurrence in society. One of the famous dystopian novels is Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818), which depicts dehumanization and the horrors of science and technology that led a scientist to meet his fate at the hands of his own creation. There is a scientist in the novel, Victor Frankenstein who creates a human figure by exploiting his scientific knowledge imparting it with life who becomes the cause of Frankenstein’s death and all his relatives and friends. It is the work of Nature to create something and endow it with life but in the long run, humans have gathered so much scientific knowledge and being misled by the power of science they are directed to a wrong path from where
there is no coming back. The works like Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World* (1932) is also such novel that portrays the ill-effects of the misuse of science and is regarded to be the best known dystopian fiction. Animal imagery is rampant in this novel. The novel evocates the dangers of biological or genetic engineering in which the humans are generated not through natural births but in a factory laboratory under controlled circumstances. The novel is set in near future reflecting an age of ultra humans that are scientifically designed to live in a happy state as they are grown and conditioned in a controlled environment in verisimilitude of the world of bees. H. G. Wells *The Time Machine* (1895) another of his most famous scientific novels is an example of Dying Earth subgenre. The novel is about time traveling through an extraordinary scientific device, the time machine that travels into a distant future where the humanity is doomed to death. It can be placed within the realm of eschatology that means the study of the end of the world and doomed fate of humankind. In this future world, the Earth stands at an apocalyptic stage where the whole Nature has been transformed into a monstrous calamity and a baleful atmosphere has swept over the whole Earth. Wells describes the end of life on the Earth through the following words:

The darkness grew apace, a cold wind began to blow in freshening gusts from the east, and the showering white flakes in the air increased in number. From the edge of the sea came a ripple and whisper. Beyond these lifeless sounds the world was silent. Silent? It would be hard to convey the stillness of it. All the sounds of man, the bleating of sheep, the cries of birds, the hum of insects, the stir that makes the background of our lives—all that was over. (Wells *The Modern Utopia*)

He admits in the novel that the coming apocalypse is the outcome of human’s unwise attempts at altering the laws of Nature. These dystopian novels reflect cataclysmic decline of the Earth and
the horrors of certain environmental dangers that hint towards the imminent threat of the end of whole humanity.

In the current Anthropocene era, where the human activities of eco-catastrophe, the concept of Nature has fully lost all its actual significance and wonder. Nature is now no longer seen as an entity of evoking any admiration or feelings of wonder resonating in the heart of the spectators. The different elements of Nature are seen just as objects for human use and commercial interests. Nature has become a means for extracting every possible benefit. Since many decades, the continuous mutilation, domestication, and sterilization of Nature have become a recurrent phenomenon that has degraded the quality as well as the quantity of Nature. An excessive utilization and exploitation of the natural resources both renewable and non-renewable have rendered them either useless or ineffective because of the constant loss of their essential quality, increase in their polluted contents and a great reduction in their number or quantity. This is largely due to the accelerated and hurried pace of the humanity where it has forgotten to go along at a slow pace with ‘Mother Nature’. Human beings have developed buildings, manufactured clothing items from the parts of the natural organisms, created machinery to stand against the face of the Earth and has polluted a good amount of fresh and clean air, pure drinking water, and a fertile soil, rich in nutrients, culling useful decomposing organisms like earthworms, certain insects and microorganisms. In fact, the humans have brought Nature at such crossroads where it seems really impossible to bring her back to a position of normalcy, to fill it again with the same levels of wildness, purity, density, innocence, dewiness, softness, and dynamic balance between species. The modern ideologies, man’s instinctual Nature to dominate over the other, his materialistic and authoritarian attitude, the discoveries and scientific inventions as well as industrial and technological progression are the main culprits behind the reduction of Nature and its beings into mere ‘objects’; into objects for study,
objects for experiments, commercialization, marketing and display, gaining material benefits.

However, it might be said that the humans in the Paleolithic Age were the first hunters and gatherers initiating the earliest stage in the beginning of the Nature’s exploitation which gradually led to a certain change in the attitude of humankind. The so-called Anthropocene era is said to have begun from the ancient era of human history. As Lynn White says, “the hypothesis that his first-drive method of hunting created the world’s great grasslands and helped to exterminate the monster mammals of the Pleistocene from much of the globe is plausible, if not proved” (Glotfelty and Fromm 3). During the primordial times, there was a huge diversity of flora and fauna and certain tribes had just begun to indulge in the activities of hunting and gathering for their survival. With the development of farming, these traditional societies gave way to agrarian and settler communities. However, in those days, societies were more sustainable and were more attuned to nature. But the modern societies have cut themselves from the roots of their existence due to scientific and technological advancements. Primarily though, there are two viewpoints that define these societies. Whereas, the primordial or traditional societies are marked by their pastoral tradition, the modern societies reflect an anti-pastoral view. In a pastoral tradition, the relationship between the human and non-human seem more ideal than real. The pastoral landscape is a soothing agent for one’s physical and spiritual sustenance. All these features now form the background of most of the literary and cultural theories, eco-criticism being one of them. This new critical trope has graphic and powerful applications in literary expression.

Eco-criticism is a field of study that focuses on the representation of Nature and ecological objects in various literary genres such as poetry, novels, short stories, nature writings or other creative works. It studies various aspects of Nature from ecological
perspective. It is a consciousness-raising phenomenon that aims to create awareness among the readers about the pressing ecological concerns such as misuse of Nature and natural objects for material needs, capitalistic control over the natural things. These include building of mills and dams on rivers; use of rivers and sea for transportation and for commercial purposes; incessant cutting of trees and clearing of forests for obtaining timber, rubber and for other purposes – like for the manufacture of paper, medicines, etc., and also for building of roads, railway tracks, and housing sectors; killing of animals and other creatures – insects, birds, reptiles as well as sea-creatures – for obtaining food, leather, feathers, tusks, horns and for use in the manufacturing of numerous human products, and degradation of environment through emissions from automobiles, factories and industries and various radioactive materials thereby polluting it severely. Eco-criticism aims to show how fictions, poems and nature-writings that are eco-centered can contribute a lot in comprehending these urgent and crucial environmental problems through simulating the utopian and dystopian visions of environmental future. Ecocriticism formulates most of its critical ideas on the philosophies of deep ecology. The deep ecology dreams and desires for a better society either reverting back to pastoral form of existence or envisioning of a futuristic society created out of ecologically sustainable design. These two different kinds of societies have been depicted in the nature novels taken up here for study.

The chapter analyses four novels that represent distinct ecological notions about counteractive influences between humans vis-à-vis Nature. The eco-critical element prevails in all of the following novels: George Eliot’s *The Mill on the Floss* (1860), Khushwant Singh’s *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale* (1959), Starhawk’s *The Fifth Sacred Thing* (1993) and Ernest Callenbach’s *Ecotopia* (1975). These novels have been discussed and elaborated in a particular order of succession where one emotion succeeds the other in relation to the environment. The first feeling towards Nature arises
during childhood when a child begins to observe Nature and immerse himself or herself in the joyous activities of Nature as is evident in the novel *The Mill on the Floss* where the change in human emotions and attitudes is traced from the childhood to the adulthood. This novel presents the story of two siblings, a young girl, Mary and her brother Tom, both of whom engage in playful activities in the lap of Nature. The work was written during the Victorian period that was an age of industrialization and material and scientific growth. The author, George Eliot has captured the impact of industrialization and modernization on the social and human relations. The novel focuses on the change and development of the thoughts of a child from childhood adulthood when one encounters the cultural growth of the civilization. The novel is particularly about the existence of Nature, (the river Floss) as a character in the companionship of the innocent children that enforces its identity upon the material society. The next novel, Khushwant Singh’s *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale* (1959) was written during the pre-Independence era when India was under the rule of British colonial empire. The author is a close observer of the natural world that is picturesquely depicted in the novel too. The novel also manifests the extremist tendencies of human beings that lead them to misappropriation of the ecological world. Then there are some eco-spiritual undertones also that resonate in the mind of the protagonist, Sher Singh who listens to the daily chanting of the Guru mantras by his mother Sabhrai, a deeply spiritual lady. The third novel taken up for study is *The Fifth Sacred Thing* (1993) written by Starhawk a.k.a Miriam Simos. The novel is about California in America. It is divided into two parts, North and the South while the South is purely dystopian, the North is based on ecotopian ideals. It shows the conflict between the two worlds. The last novel is *Ecotopia* written by Ernest Callenbach in 1975 that describes a futuristic society based on the Utopian models of liberty, equality, ad fraternity. The citizens of this new world live a perfectly organized life in an eco-friendly manner and have developed eco-oriented models and designs for a better lifestyle without harming any element
of Nature. All these novels efficiently evocate the eco-critical views that interrelate with the felt experiences of human beings.

**An Ecocritical Reading of George Eliot’s *The Mill on the Floss* (1860)**

Eco-criticism derives its basic formulations from British Romanticism. Romanticism in literature was a definite reaction to industrialization that leads to the destruction of Nature and natural surroundings. Similarly, eco-criticism is a larger version of romanticism that has raised its voice against the burning issues of environment, the commercialization of natural objects and worst effects of several socio-cultural activities. The chapter is an attempt to study the possible relationships of the characters and their activities with the world of Nature and its activities in the novel *The Mill on the Floss* (1860) by George Eliot. Her other novels are also marked by the same characteristics, that is, reflecting the connection between humans and natural world. Eliot is very much fascinated with the world of science, especially with the biological world of Darwin. Her masterpiece work, *Middlemarch* (1872) can be regarded as the most scientific of all of her novels. The constant scientific image that appears in the novel is that of the microscope which is used by the character, Lydgate in the novel to find out the most “primitive tissue” (Eliot, *Middlemarch* 143). Her first novel *The Mill on the Floss* incorporates Darwin theories about evolution like the ‘survival of the fittest’ and the species’ struggle for existence. Darwin’s theories of sexual selection, relationship between siblings and male-female relationships are well traced in the novels of Eliot, especially in *The Mill on the Floss* (1860), *Middlemarch* (1872), and *Daniel Deronda* (1876). Eliot’s *Silas Marner* (1861) is a typical novel exploring the pure, innocent and natural relationships that ever exist between human and non-human world. Every character in this novel is described through an ecological context and feature. Silas Marner, the protagonist in the novel belongs to lowly and miserable class and
Archana raises a small girl child Eppie who is the daughter of a Squire. While Silas Marner, a cloth weaver is compared with an insect or the spider, Eppie is likened to a living plant.

*The Mill on the Floss* traces how the lives and the activities of the characters deeply influence the life and activities of Nature which in turn affect the human world as well and how these influences could be good or bad upon man and Nature. The title of the novel itself hints towards the domination of Nature by the human world. The water-mill, a man-made object has been built upon the river Floss for reaping personal benefits out of it. The novel describes the natural beauty of the two towns of Dorlcote Mill and St. Ogg’s whose rural texture is losing its way due to their transition into industrial centres marked by increasing industrialization during the mid-19th century Victorian era. The novel depicts how the external, social and economic forces create a negative impact on the life of the Tullivers, particularly that of Maggie. The town of St. Ogg’s marks its contribution to the economic and technological progress of the early 19th century however its outcome proves disastrous for the novel’s major protagonists, Tom and Maggie. The novel describes a pastoral community of St. Ogg’s that is marred by modernity and commercial growth of the traditional society:

... it is ultimately the modernity of the new, industrial England that quite literally kills [Maggie] when the boat she and Tom are using to escape from the mill during the flood is hit by fragments of ‘some wooden machinery [which have] just given way on one of the wharves.’ This conservative Wordsworthian vision of a traditional order of rural life being destroyed by the arrival of the progressive but ruthless forces of modernity is of course in line with the novel’s presentation of the world of the Tulliver’s Dodson relatives, personifying the very
attitudes and values that made the development of the modern, nineteenth-century England possible. (Rogers)

The novel brings out the reciprocal cause-and-effect relationship between the world of man and the world of Nature. In the novel, George Eliot has presented a realistic picture of the Victorian society, a society which has gripped itself with the ongoing developments – urbanization, industrialization, and capitalism that has begun to affect the outer as well as the inner world of man and Nature. This novel can be read from different perspectives, but the main concern of the research is to read it from an ecocritical Marxist perspective. According to Nayar:

Eco-criticism originates in a bio-social context of unrestrained capitalism, excessive exploitation of Nature, worrying definitions and shapes of ‘development’ and environmental hazard. While it does not seek to alter the courses of any of these very real factors, its task is to see how theoretically informed readings of cultural texts can contribute not only to consciousness raising but also look into the politics of development and the construction of ‘Nature’. (241)

The novel is a reflective piece of the two opposite selves of both the characters and the Nature, the personal and the social selves. In the beginning of the novel, the personal selves of the protagonists, Tom and Maggie that stands in contrast with the general view of Nature finds a full-fledged expression. While Nature becomes a social figure as it has been objectified by the human society that reaps material benefits out of it by putting it to their use by constructing the mill on the tributary of river Floss, it also simultaneously helps in the formation of the unique selves of the innocent characters. In the first part of the novel, Nature appears as a playful mate who shapes and moulds the personalities of its innocent companions. *The Mill on the Floss* is regarded as “Eliot’s ‘most Wordsworthian novel’” in
which she is also “most concerned with both female education and brother-sister relationship” (Homans 578). The main characters in the novel, Tom and Maggie are intricately linked with the natural world and their brother-sister relationship comes out in a most vivid manner when it is seen in a co-relation with the world of Nature. The character of Maggie is so intertwined and interwoven within the fabric of symbolic manifestations of Nature around her that it displays itself in variegated colours. Leaping and playing in the lap of Nature has made this naughty little girl wild and frolicsome like Nature. She is even termed ‘gypsy’ girl by her aunt Pullet (gypsies are known to be wild and savage who mostly live in and around natural surroundings). Maggie has a great fascination and an utmost love for water which frequently frightens her mother that she will someday be drowned in it as she once admits before her husband, Mr. Tulliver (Maggie’s father): “Ah I thought so – wanderin’ up an’ down by the water, like a wild thing: she’ll tumble in some day” (Eliot 12).

The narrator refers to her as a “small mistake of Nature” and compares her with a ‘small Shetland pony’ when she incessantly tosses her head “to keep the dark heavy locks out of her gleaming black eyes – which gave her very much an air of a small Shetland pony” (13). Further, Maggie is compared with a Skye terrier, (a dog breed). Her brother, Tom is in sheer contrast to Maggie. While Maggie is of animalistic kind and is much like a ‘halfwild’ Nature and does naughtiest things but whenever she does, she does them accidentally or in spontaneous overflow of her feelings but not wilfully, Tom is aggressive and badly treats the animals or birds around him. The Garum Firs of his aunt Pullet presents itself as a treat to this “young gentleman fond of animals – fond, that is, of throwing stones at them” (Eliot 75). He derives pleasure in frightening the birds and the animals, he had even once been found guilty by Mr. Pullet “of running after the peacock, with an illusory idea that fright would make one of its feathers drop off” (80). The man has always tamed Nature to become its master that is, said-to-be
his inferior. Even Tom shows this instinct from an early age as shown in the following passage:

. . . he was often observed peeping through the bars of a gate and making minatory gestures with his small fore-finger while he scolded the sheep with an inarticulate burr, intended to strike terror into their astonished minds; indicating thus early that desire for mastery over the inferior animals, wild and domestic, including cockchafers (i.e. beetles), neighbours’ dogs and small sisters, which in all ages has been an attribute of so much promise for the fortunes of our race. (Eliot 78)

This contrast in the characters of Tom and Maggie, however, does not affect their relationship. They continue to love each other as brother and sister. The earlier part of the novel presents the narrator's subsequent reflections on the value of memories of a childhood passed in Nature. Both Tom and Maggie love to pass their time in the open lap of Nature. Maggie is innocent and self-absorbed child, who like Lucy in Wordsworth’s ‘Lucy Poems’, loves to rejoice in the lap of Nature, play and leap about among the trees, and rush along the flow of water of the river Floss. She always remains absorbed and wrapped-up in herself yet it does not mean that she is selfish; it is all due to her forgetfulness. But whenever she is in a compromising situation regarding her brother, Tom, she becomes selfish in a manner that reflects her sisterly love for her brother.

Nature not only plays a great role in the development of the characters of Tom and Maggie but also influences their brother-sister relationship. The novel is an expression of the interactive influences of the natural world upon the human identity. Tom has a great love for the rabbits which he had bought by spending all his money and has instructed Maggie to take care of them till he comes back from his boarding school. But she fails to take care of them due to her forgetfulness and all of them die due to starvation and when Tom
hears of this he feels deeply hurt and punishes Maggie for it by putting an end to all communication between them. The carelessness and forgetfulness of Maggie strains their relationship for a time being. Just as Wordsworth rejoices in Nature and in every meanest flower that blows and just as his heart dances with the “dancing daffodils”, Tom and Maggie also rejoice in Nature but they have their own way of reaping joys out of it. Maggie rejoices in everything that is connected with Nature while Tom enjoys fishing, engages himself in playful activities with his naughtiest friend, Bob, such as frightening of birds and other such activities. And whenever Tom gets upset with Maggie he runs away to play with Bob. He forgets Maggie completely whenever he is in Bob’s company.

Bob also seems to be closer to Nature as evident through his activities which appears to be diabolical to Maggie: “for she had seen Bob take off his cap to show a little snake that was inside it, and another time he had a handful of young bats; whenever he sees a bird’s egg, he can instantly tell “whether it was swallow’s, or a tomtit’s, or a yellow hammer’s” (41); he can find out all “the wasp’s nests, and could set all sorts of traps; he could climb the trees like a squirrel, and had quite a magical power of detecting the hedgehogs and stoats”; he even does naughty things “such as making gap in the hedgerows, throwing stones after the sheep, killing a cat that was wandering incognito” (Eliot 41). And as all of these little children grow into larger beings, they retreated away from their interconnectedness with the things of Nature. As Sueellen Campbell aptly says: “this view is the Wordsworthian one that as children we are in perfect harmony with Nature, but then we lose that harmony as we develop the barrier of a self” (135).

The relationship of the novel with Wordsworthian romanticism stands out most vividly and exquisitely in the fishing scene of the novel and subsequent reflections on the memories of the childhood days. Both Tom and Maggie love fishing at the Round Pool. While
both Tom and Maggie engage themselves in “fishing harmoniously together at ‘the old favourite spot’, ‘Maggie thought it would make a nice heaven to sit by the pool in that way and never be scolded’” (Homans 583). This ‘old favourite spot’, also known as the Round Pool – a ‘wonderful pool’ made by the floods long ago, “is a pool of unknown depth and mysterious origin that is literally hidden from view, being ‘framed in with willows and tall reeds, so that the water was only to be seen when you got close to the brink’ (583).

When both Tom and Maggie are thus busy in this fishing expedition, Tom acts as a supervisor guiding her in this “practical business of fishing” while Maggie, who has no interest in this, “had forgotten all about the fish and was looking dreamily at the glassy water” just at this instant she hears Tom’s “loud whisper” that makes her frightened as if she has done “something wrong, as usual” but it turns out instead that she has inadvertently caught a fish, she “is not conscious of unusual merit” (583). Her happiness constitutes not in this ‘unusual merit’ of catching a fish but “in such accidental absence of wrong-doing and listening alternately to Tom’s whispers and to the ‘Happy whisperings’ exchanged between the ‘light dipping sounds of the rising fish’” (that she has caught in her fishing rod) “and the gentle rustling of the willows and reeds” (583). This lovely and beautiful childhood scene arouse in the hearts of Tom and Maggie – who are in happy and sublime communings not only with each other but also with the water and the willows – a vague idea that their lives will remain forever the same. In the end of this passage, the narrator generalizes the Wordsworthian principle which this scene seems to generate: “Life did change for Tom and Maggie; and yet they were not wrong in believing that the thoughts and loves of these first years would always make part of their lives” (Eliot 36).

In this novel, Nature is not inert and influences every human being and on all the phenomena going on in the human world. The “thoughts and loves of these first years” (36) refers not only to the
love of children for each other but also for the natural objects in their natural surroundings – the mill, their own little river, the Ripple, the great river Floss; the fish, the water-rats and snakes of the Round pool as well as the water of these rivers and the pool – that act not just as backgrounds to these childish ‘thoughts and loves’ and the brother-sister relationship but create a dignified charm upon them through its inanimate and sublime presence. This childhood love for Nature is best explicit in this Wordsworthian frame of reference:

We could never have loved the Earth so well if we had had no childhood in it – if it were not the Earth where the same flowers come up again every spring that we used to gather with our tiny fingers as we sat lisping to ourselves on the grass – the same hips and haws on the autumn hedgerows – the same redbreasts that we used to call “God’s birds”, because they did no harm to the precious crops. What novelty is worth that sweet monotony where everything is known, and loved because it is known? (36)

The novel also provides us a full view of the wonderful landscape surrounding the river Floss that resembles the ‘Wordsworthian world’. Following is an account of the narrator that seems to reflect the intense power of the scene in arousing the spontaneous recollections of emotions in the heart of the narrator:

The wood I walk in on this mild May day, with the young yellow brown foliage of the oaks between me and the blue sky, the white star-flowers and the blue-eyed speedwell and the ground ivy at my feet – what grove of tropic palms, what strange ferns or splendid broad-petalled blossoms, could ever thrill such deep and delicate fibres within me as this home-scene? These familiar flowers, these well-remembered birdnotes, this sky, with its fitful brightness, these furrowed and grassy fields, each with a sort of personality given to it by the
capricious hedgerows – such things as these are the mother tongue of our imagination, the language that is laden with all the subtle inextricable associations the fleeting hours of our childhood left behind them. (36)

This passage intensifies the whole natural setting of the novel. In fact, the novel is studded and sprinkled throughout with the minute and picturesque descriptions of Nature which provide a panoramic view of the atmosphere, the objects and the inhabitants of the all-pervasive Nature. The author in the passage strikes a link between childhood innocence and the pastoral view of Nature, both are transient in nature. In the Romantic age, pastoral is viewed as a vehicle for an elegy overlaid by utopian radicalism that was flawed by its historical sense of nature that is static and barely endangered by human activity (Garrard). The way with which Eliot describes the whole natural environment seems more Darwinian in its aspect. She gives minute details of her natural observations that reflect her knowledge of the biological world of Charles Darwin. Influenced by Darwin’s theory of species’ struggle for survival, Eliot has tried to show that how the elements of nature struggle to survive on this ‘human-owned’ earth. The river Floss creates havoc on the human society to mark its presence and disrupts the livelihood of human beings by attacking at the commercial activities of Tullivers and Mr. Wakem’s business that was made possible due to the river.

However in the novel, we can also trace some differences in Eliot’s and Wordsworth’s descriptions of Nature. While Eliot’s natural descriptions can be seen in relation to the significance of the “rural” or natural objects, Wordsworth’s descriptions concentrate on the solitariness of the childhood in Nature. The children’s love for the rustic objects can be observed not as “deeper, wider kinds of love” (Homans 584), but as “a renewed love of those identical objects. Even the expected reference to the endurance of Maggie’s love for Tom – for which there would in any case be no place in the Wordworthian
paradigm of solitary childhood in Nature – is replaced by this love of objects” (584).

The novel seems to promise an idyllic harmony between the world of man and the natural world. However on the other hand it also brings out the appropriation of this natural world by the same human world for its materialistic purposes. According to John Kucich, “George Eliot’s early novels cherish a world of objects” which are “always embedded in human centers of meaning” and these natural objects are valued by Eliot “only insofar as they serve human knowledge, motives, and needs” and “that this intimate relation between man and matter” is considered “to be one phase of her moral program” (558). He further says:

In the very first chapter of The Mill on the Floss, for example, the narrator surveys rustic objects in what has conventionally been understood as a benign, Wordsworthian discovery of the world’s symbolic plenitude: corn, ships, trees, rooftops – all can be said to take their meaning within a human act of imagination and memory; all are composed in relation to the narrator's Wordsworthian desire to unite mind with matter. (558)

The second part of the novel begins when the immensity of Nature comes face to face with the might of the commercial society of the Victorian period. The Victorian age adverted towards capitalism and materialism which is reflected in this realistic Victorian novel. This capitalistic and materialistic world that has severely and intricately entangled most of its inhabitants in its clasp and has not only made them insensitive and indifferent towards the natural surroundings. Without any reciprocal gifts humans only exploit and appropriate natural resources for materialistic gains and to achieve power and prestige in society.
Eliot has tried to show in the novel how the “commercial objects relentlessly interpenetrate natural ones” and how “the novel’s eventual horror over St. Ogg’s commercial single-mindedness” has resulted in the hybridizing of the landscape that “can be seen as much more ambiguous and threatening than it is usually thought to be” (Kucich 559). She depicts, in a stark contrast, in the novel how the anti-pastoral elements of industrialization and urbanization have made their way into the peaceful realm of the pastoral world. The description of the town of St. Ogg’s, in the opening of the novel, depicts how the ‘raw matter’ or the natural objects are “never left at rest” but are “always invaded by economic matter”:

A wide plain, where the broadening Floss hurries on between its green banks to the sea, and the loving tide, rushing to meet it, checks its passage with an impetuous embrace. On this mighty tide the black ships – laden with the fresh-scented fir-planks, with rounded sacks of oil-bearing seed, or with the dark glitter of coal – are borne along to the town of St.Ogg’s, which shows its aged, fluted red roofs and the broad gables of its wharves between the low wooded hill and the river brink, tinging the water with a soft purple hue under the transient glance of this February sun. Far away on each side stretch the rich pastures and the patches of dark Earth, made ready for the seed of broad-leaved green crops, or touched already with the tint of the tender-bladed autumn-sown corn. (Eliot 7)

This description thus brings out the extent of human appropriation of Nature or the “raw matter” for material purposes – such as use of ‘black ships’ that are “abruptly superimposed on a natural, watery ‘embrace’” (Kucich 559) of the river Floss, for the transportation of the commercial goods (fir-planks, oil-seeds, coal, etc.). As the passage goes on, we are introduced to the horses, “the
strong, submissive, meek-eyed beasts who” as the narrator fancies “are looking with mild reproach” at the waggoner “from between their blinkers” and who must work to earn their “hardly-earned feed of corn” (Eliot 8) and then to the mill that has been built on the small river Ripple (the tributary of the great river Floss) that belongs to Mr. Tulliver, the father of Tom and Maggie. For John Kucich:

The pastoral overtones in the novel pull one’s sensibilities toward approval, yet our familiarity with the novel’s great brooding theme – Maggie’s inability to free herself from a world that is overly pragmatic and overly “economic” in a number of senses – should make us wary of regarding any loss of natural independence to commercial uses too lightly. (Kucich 559-60)

Here one can trace a fusion of natural objects and commercialized things which not only “subject the entire landscape” but also the ‘inferior’ creatures such as horses, fish and birds to the “functional use of man” (560). There are major symbolic objects in the novel that tend to “magnify such fusions: the mill itself, source of Maggie’s longing for origin, is rooted in Nature but swamped by its commercial destiny” (560); the Dutch vessels that are used by the commercial companies float on the river Floss and “even the landscape of the Red Deeps where Maggie meets lover Philip Wakem, appeals to her at first because of its irregular surface, which was formed by an abandoned stone quarry – the place is described slightlying by the narrator as ‘mimic rock and ravine’” (560).

The conclusion of the novel is identical with Wordsworth’s ‘Lucy Poems’. Just like Wordsworth’s Lucy, both Tom and Maggie are also born and brought up in the lap of Nature and are ultimately taken away by Nature itself in a very young age. When Maggie after her encounter with the passionate outpourings of Stephen Guest realizes the repercussions of this amoral attachment and disloyalty towards her cousin Lucy Deane, she retreats from this dejected
stateback into her old situation – the process of self-renunciation, gradually winning back the love and trust of all. However, her relationship with her brother remains estranged. She wavers between the two loves – that of Stephen and of Philip Wakem, if she lives she will have to confront this conflicting situation all throughout her life and in this condition death seems to be the only possible alternative for her.

The protagonist is reminded of the same sublime spiritual words of Thomas à Kempis she has read years ago during her first self-renunciation process at a young age of thirteen. She prays to God to bless her with strength and patience: “O God, if my life is to be long, let me live to bless and comfort – “just at this instant, “Maggie felt a startling sensation of sudden cold about her knees and feet: it was water flowing under her. She started up: the stream was flowing under the door that led into the passage. She was not bewildered for an instant – she knew it was flood” (Eliot 417). Thus, to raise her above from the ongoing conflicts in her mind and to unite her with her brother, the flood came rushing on. This final catastrophe in the lives of Tom and Maggie led to their reunion in death. They get drowned in the flood not because of this natural disaster but because of that “wooden machinery” that collided with their boat. So in the end, it is not the river Floss – the natural object but the material device or ‘the man-made object’ that leads to this destruction.

Nature manifests itself as a living presence in the novel shown as both benevolent and destructive. The river Floss becomes an archetypal image of the Nature’s growing wrath in the wake of the commercialization and industrial growth during the mid-19th century. In the novel the river emerges as a powerful symbol of ‘life-in-death’ as is evident in the end of the novel where it assumes a form of a turbulent flood that not only takes away the lives of the central protagonists, Tom and Maggie but also unites them in their death. It came as a saving grace for Maggie for whom the life had become so
difficult, leaving no solution for her. It is the same river that had earlier encased her in the glory of its benign attraction. Since her childhood, she has been witchingly enchanted by the waters of the Ripple, the tributary of the river Floss, and the Round Pool where she used to go fishing with her brother Tom. Thus it can be said that water or the river Floss has played a great role in the development of the character of Maggie. She can be likened with the great river as the wildest passions flow within her untimidly. As she becomes mature, moral inhibitions of the society are forced upon her just as the river is struck with heavy loads of man-made obstacles. The whole society, her brother and even fate have gone against her, at such a moment the river comes as a saviour of the Maggie’s character. She gets filled with a gush of courage for the love of her brother and sails off swiftly on the raging floods to save her brother and they both get united in their death.

The river, that was earlier seen to be flowing smoothly and peacefully in the background of all action and drama of materialistic human society where childhood innocence and passionate wildness had no place, apparently foregrounds itself in the end. It claims the lives of Tom and Maggie in their pure innocence and saves them from the inhumane materialistic world. The weaknesses of the profane society come to the fore after the havoc caused by the river. Nature imagery becomes a constant symbol in the novel as Eliot has used it to pinpoint the flaws of the townsfolk who have created disturbances in the life of Maggie:

You could not live among such people; you are stifled for want of an outlet towards something beautiful, great, or noble: you are irritated with these dull men and women, as a kind of population out of keeping with the Earth on which they live – with this rich plain where the great river flows forever onward and links the small pulse of
the old English town with the beatings of the world’s mighty heart. (Eliot 284)

This novel is an ecocritical satire on the “rural materialism” – a satiric attack on unbridled commercialism that is narrowing the cultural consciousness of the rustic people and has brought them away from their natural environment severing all of their associations and correspondences with Nature including the childhood reminiscences of the playful activities in the lap of Nature. All the partners of the childhood days who as children are more close to Nature – Tom, Maggie, Lucy and Bob, as their characters grow and develop in the novel are losing away the innocent associations with Nature. The grown-ups are more prone to adopt the cultural ways of life as they live in an age drenched in self-centered materialism and capitalism.

As John Kucich admits in his review:

More broadly, the novel seems to lament the destruction of Maggie’s natural energies (she is often called ‘wild’ or compared sympathetically to animals), by the constricting economic and procedural preoccupations of St. Ogg’s, a town that has fallen ‘out of keeping with the Earth’ and that has traded ‘the grandeur of the wild beast’ for an ‘oppressive narrowness’. . . . (561)

Analysing the novel the critic further comments, that for the Tullivers and for St. Ogg’s, at least, the widespread use of Nature for human purposes has destroyed its romantic, creative power, and Maggie’s hopeless separation from the organic world of her childhood – which has somehow become bound up in the legal and financial status of the mill – underscores the urgency of that loss. The conjunction of natural sites with functional sites haunts the very title of the novel, and Tom and Maggie are destroyed finally not just by Nature and the flood but by “wooden machinery” (561). Nature has been swamped by cultural intrusion. The novel also shows that the children must suffer for the mistakes of elders who overpower the
world of Nature. It is thus apt to say here that – “Nature herself occasionally quarters an inconvenient parasite on an animal towards whom she has otherwise no ill-will” (Eliot 24). In this case this ‘inconvenient parasite’ is the flood and ‘animal’ – Tom and Maggie.

Despite all this havoc caused by the floods, life grows on. Both Nature and the humans eventually recover from the consequential effects of the flood. Nature renews itself into a purer shape, “repairs her ravages – repairs them with her sunshine, and with human labour”, however not completely as “the upturned trees are not rooted again; the parted hills are left scarred. . . . To the eyes that have dwelt on the past, there is no thorough repair” (Eliot 422). According to Fredrick Turner, “Nature bears the weight of our activities, but in the long run renews itself and remains just as it was. Left to itself, Nature settles into a balance, a rhythm, that is eternal and unchanging” (42). Nature is too sublime and splendid and potently renews and refreshes itself as depicted through the ongoing flow of river Floss. The material pursuit of humans cannot hinder and stole it. In fact, Nature offers solutions to many human predicament. The convincing resolution of the conflict in the novel bears testimony to Nature’s awe-inspiring powers. In the novel, the pastoral view of nature is contrasted with the sublime view of the natural world. Whereas, the pastoral image celebrates the dominion of humanity upon the nonhuman world, the sublime view of Nature “refers to the thrill and danger of confronting untamed Nature and its overwhelming forces, such as thunderstorms and deep chasms” (Rabb). In the pastoral view of Nature, the scenes are described as calm and peaceful, “often depicting ripe harvests, lovely gardens, manicured lawns with broad vistas, and fattened livestock” (Rabb). It describes a domesticated landscape from which the humans can reap the benefit of Man has developed and tamed the landscape – it yields the necessities we need to live, as well as beauty and safety. Sublime images, on the other hand, show Nature at its most fearsome; in fact, Burke believed that “terror is in all cases... the ruling principle of the
sublime” (qtd. in Rabb). There is an awe and reverence for the wild that to Burke was akin to violent passion. Humanity is small and impotent in front of raging rivers, dizzying cliffs and canyons, ferocious animals, and violent storms. These works can also be uplifting, but in a deeply spiritual way. The Sublime emphasizes God’s dominion over humanity and considers the possible folly in mankind’s overriding confidence.

**Spirituality and Counter Eco-terrorism in Khushwant Singh’s *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale* (1959)**

The chapter seeks to analyze the novel *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale* (1959) by Khushwant Singh from historical perspectives that tend to interlink the socio-political conditions with the local environment of a district in Amritsar. The novel also reflects the extremist tendencies of the revolutionaries in the novel who also indulge in nature harming activities, a feature of eco-terrorism. Counter eco-terrorism is regarded as any act of violence, mutilation or killing of any species of Nature for some political or material benefit by a group of rebellious individuals, profiteers or hunters. According to Paul Watson, “The act of violently killing wild species, despoiling eco-systems and diminishing biodiversity is the real definition of eco-terrorism. In opposing this destruction we are countering eco-terrorism”. In the novel, the author portrays this kind of warfare against environment for the satisfaction of one’s needs or using the objects of nature for one’s personal training through the character of Sher Singh and his gang of boys.

The novel discusses the concerns of the novelist with the circumstances prevalent during the 1940’s in Punjab before independence taking into account the nationalist movement for freedom hinted at in the novel through the reactions of many of the characters to the 1942 freedom struggle. Khushwant Singh tries to create the myth of history in the novel recalling the important incidents like Jallianwallah Bagh Massacre, Hindu-Muslim riots and
the active engagements of the local extremist revolutionaries in dethroning the British out of their homeland, i.e., Punjab. However, the novel mainly devotes itself to the cause of the nationalists and their eccentric modes to free their nation state and also to the ways of the others who are the supporters of the British rule that in a way tends to evoke the postcolonial identities and attitudes.

Khushwant Singh is a great Indian writer who writes not only of his homeland, Punjab and India but also about those historical moments that are of greater significance in the history of our nation. Khushwant Singh has been a lawyer, diplomat, critic, journalist, novelist, historian, humorist, naturalist and a politician – all rolled into one. In India, there is a close relation between religion and politics. Khushwant Singh as a writer and also a journalist cannot remain unaware to the nexus between religion and politics in the Indian context. His novels capture the postcolonial mindset of the age in which he wrote. The novel *Train to Pakistan* is regarded to be his masterpiece concentrating on the events of Partition of India that took place in 1947. The 1942 events of the Quit India Movement form the backdrop of his *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale* that is considered to be the best of his novels. The present chapter seeks to analyze the latter novel from the perspective of historicity that is intertwined into the local/localized vision of these 1942 events that were significant in the Indian struggle for freedom.

The novel touches upon some of the significant characteristics related to ecology. It is studded with the sensuous Nature images that depict the passions and emotions of the characters. The image of the bird ‘Nightingale’ in the title of the novel is imbued with multiple symbolic connotations. The author alludes to the voice of the bird as implied in the word “hear” used in the title and the word “not” in the title suggests either the voice of the bird is silenced or some character in the novel is unable to hear the voice of the bird due to some incident or tragic cause. The title is very apt as it links with the
character of Sabhrai. It is Sabhrai who on her deathbed utters this sentence near the end of the novel. As M. K. Naik points out, “the novel derives its title from her reply to her son’s assurance that after Independence, ‘once more the Nightingales will sing, she says, ‘I shall not hear the Nightingale’ – a sentiment in tune with the temper of the novel” (221). As the novel is based on the freedom movement in India, the image of the bird may stand for ‘escape’: escape from the bondage of colonial rule. It symbolizes the herald of spring implying the freedom of India from British rule. This image has also been varyingly employed by some of the great writers like Coleridge who escapes into the supernatural world, Wordsworth who finds solace in the naïve aspects of Nature and Keats escapes into the beautiful world of Greek art and Hellenism. In the “Ode to a Nightingale”, Keats seems to have been dejected from his current life and tends to fly away to another world, the world of Nature where he will listen to the melodious voice of Nightingale. The poet is swept away by the melody and rhythm of nightingale’s voice from the physical world of distress to the spiritual world of dreams. In the novel too the image not only stands for escape to the happy world but also suggests the ongoing conflicts and bouts of agony and despair involved in the characters’ struggle to freedom.

The novel I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale deeply captures the heightened sense of place-connectedness intertwining it with the role and usefulness of Nature for a human being and its emotive capability. The vivid nature-descriptions in his novels reflect his deep concern and love for Nature. The writer picturizes a beautiful landscape and its inhabitants of a district in Punjab. Besides this, the novel also presents an account of the revolutionary activities and contriving of the nationalists for the liberation of India from the clutches of the British. But at the same time it also provides a glimpse to the other incidents that happened during the years 1942-1943 that is the Second World War and the demonstrations and demands for a
separate nation by the Muslim community that led to the Partition of India.

In the novel, violence is perpetrated upon the things of Nature by the so-called revolutionaries who train themselves against the imperial Britishers. They seemed to be donning the role of eco-terrorists as in their attempts to follow their extremist actions, they have terrorized the whole environment. They have lost sense of piety and compassion for their non-human counterparts. As the novel begins, the readers are introduced with the main character Sher Singh who is the leader of a gang of extremist revolutionaries who is depicted to be enhancing his marksmanship skills in his sole aim to free the nation from the claws of the colonial rule. The author regards him and his fellowmen as ‘terrorists’ because they have chosen a sinful path of violence and extremism against the British rulers and the traitors. They have undertaken a cruel way of learning shooting skills as they target the natural ‘objects’. In the beginning of the novel, Sher Singh and the boys are depicted as engaged in the target practice against a ‘tree’:

The trunk of a tree thirty yards away bore imprints of their marksmanship. Its bark was torn; in its centre was a deep, yellow gash oozing a mixture of gum and sap. From one branch dangled a row of metal heads of electric bulbs; their glass was strewn on the ground and shone like a bed of mica. Littered about the tree were tin cans and battered pieces of cardboard sieved with holes. (Singh 1)

The anthropocentric attitude of the would-be terrorists has been deftly captured by the author in the beginning of the novel. The whole group of boys is engaged in squeamish cruelty against the muted objects of Nature. After mutilating the tree this group heads on to baptize their weapons with the blood of some animal or bird on the insistence of a smallest boy of their group. The boy’s revolutionary
spirit is evident through the following words: “we should sprinkle blood on our guns and say a short prayer to baptize them. Then we will never miss our mark and we can kill as many Englishmen as we like” (1).

In the beginning of the novel, the author conveys a heart-rending description of killing of the cranes that also sets up the time frame of the story. The novel exhibits both the hollowness and the extremism of revolutionaries in the Freedom Struggle of India. They indulge senselessly in the sadistic act of killing the birds. The righteous Indian revolutionary would never resort to such a heinous act. However this ritual of baptizing the guns in the animal blood conforms to the traditional Hindu custom of immersing swords in the goat’s blood after which they are laid before goddess Kali. The reference to such sacrificial rituals is also found in Hindu scriptures such as Vedas and Upanishads, like *Rigveda* that contains mantras for animal sacrifice and *Yajurveda* which is considered to be the Veda of sacrificial rituals.

The novel provides a beauteous projection of the natural world that stands in contrast to the brutal action of the extremist group against Nature that disrupts the serenity of the whole environment. The opening part of the novel concentrates mainly upon the poignant strife that prevails between the humans and the non-humans. The author also provides sensuous descriptions of Nature. The place where Sher Singh and the boys indulge in their target practice is endowed with natural beauties, that has been describes thus:

They crossed the stretch of chalky saltpeter and got to the edge of the swamp. There were no birds on the water. On the other side was a peepul tree on which there was a flock of white egrets. Right on the top was a King vulture with its bald red head hunched between its black shoulders. (Singh 3-4)
Sher Singh is the leader of the group but is not as aggressive as his friend, Madan, son of Wazir Chand. Madan can be regarded as the backbone of the group. Sher Singh has been involved in this revolutionary spirit only to throw the British regime out of their motherland India. This reason has led him to arrange for the smuggling of rifles and hand grenades from across the frontier so that they may train themselves in the extremist activities and led a revolt against the cruel reign of the British. Sher Singh and his mates march ahead to consecrate their weapons in the blood of some bird or animal. However the shooting season has been closed for two months that Sher Singh tries to give it as an excuse for he hesitates to kill any creature. They are planning to kill some deer or a duck to fulfill their purpose. They see a Sarus crane followed by its mate. Sher Singh is unwilling to shoot the crane since he believed that “if one of a pair is killed, the other dies of grief” (4).

Sher Singh has been brought up in the religious atmosphere of his household that has a great influence upon his thoughts and actions. He belongs to a traditional Sikh family where his deeply pious mother Sabhrai casts a spiritual and ethical control over the family members. She guides her children to take a righteous path and adopt a moral and ethical mode of life through her daily readings of their spiritual Granth. She even tries to prevent his son from indulging in any extremist acts or aggressive behaviour. She advises him not to keep a gun with himself as it is a symbol of death, murder and destruction. This learning echoes in his head while he is stalked or bullied by the other boys who force him to shoot the crane. Instigated by the sarcasm of his friends, Sher Singh finally kills the innocent bird. Just as he pulls the trigger of his gun, “the bullet hit its mark. A cloud of feathers flew up and the bird fell in mud” (Singh 5). Sher Singh’s pet, Dyer, the Alsatian dog (named after General Dyer) makes a chase after it. After this incident, Sher Singh is torn between two distinct emotions of remorse and pride for precision of shooting. However, the bird is not dead. Thus, being unable to see the bird in
this miserable condition, he walks towards the injured bird and puts his right foot on its neck and the crane instantly dies. Sher Singh succeeds in his first attempt of taking someone’s life. The mate of that bird utters a shrill cry described by the author as “the anguished cry of the flying crane is almost human” (Singh 6). It constantly hovers around the dead body of its mate who is taken by the gang for the purification of their weapons from its blood. However the voice of this distressed crane follows the protagonist till he gets to his home. Sher Singh can feel the pain of the bird in his heart. The killing of the crane haunts him for several days, he was followed by its mate till he reaches his home trying to make him realize his sin. But he fears his mother and cannot face her after this act. He even lied to her that they had wanted to kill some bird like pigeon but did not come across any so he presented himself in a good light to his mother. Sabhrai, a religious lady, do not like such sinful act of killing “poor, harmless birds” (15) as she advises Sher Singh to “sell his shotgun” (16) which is a “cause of sin” (16). For her, “to take the life of innocent creatures is sin” (16).

In the novel, the three aspects – violence, fear and injustice stand in contrast to the spiritual atmosphere created by Sabhrai in the household of Sher Singh. The early morning rituals carried out in the household like bathing, cleaning and then the chanting of the mantras from the holy Sri Guru Granth Sahib fill the hearts of the characters with sanctity and sobriety. It awakens their moral conscience. But later in the day, as the characters encounter the real world (the world of immediate calling) they get back to their mundane activities in their egotistic mould unable to maintain their moral aspect or the sobriety throughout the day. The same thing can be noticed in the behaviour of Sher Singh who involves himself in the daily recitation of the holy chants, praying for the well-being of all living beings, ecological harmony, to be free of all evils, praying not to indulge in acts of violence against any being. He forgets everything that the Holy Granth teaches him when it comes to the learning of his
marksmanship skill where he wounds and even kills the “dumb” creatures, mutilating the tree and one of the pair of love birds (the cranes) leaving the other in utmost distress.

**Eco-Spirituality in Starhawk’s *The Fifth Sacred Thing* (1993)**

The aspect of eco-terrorism leads to the forestalling of a spiritually envisioned futuristic society where the world has been purified from the divisions of castes, classes, gender, creed, sex or races or even species. The demarcations of borders and frontiers give way to spiritual oneness endowing the citizens with spiritual energies that looms larger in their soulful experiences of the Earth and all of its processes. One such society has been showcased in the novel *The Fifth Sacred Thing* (1993) by Starhawk that treads on a spiritual path to wisdom and conscience. The fight for peace and protection goes on simultaneously with different aspects in a society whether it is from the other societies or some environmental disaster. The novel *The Fifth Sacred Thing* reflects a future modern state which, in the words of Haran and King, is a:

. . . portrayal of a mid-21st Century no-longer-United States, informed by ecofeminist critiques of capitalism, patriarchy, and fundamentalist religion already then seemed urgent to many readers. Its depiction is of a future where, despite serious environmental degradation, one community has renounced violence and reshaped its social and material relations in just and anti-oppressive ways, living joyfully and in peace—albeit a peace that is continually struggled over.

The narrative of the book *The Fifth Sacred Thing* is sewn into the thread of interlinked themes, motifs and patterns of thoughts that emerge from the thinking of eco-oriented protagonists in the novel. The novel brings closer the two contradictory worlds of Utopian and Dystopian Nature in which the characters struggle to thwart the plans
of Millennialist society to subdue the rebelling forces or communities. The novel is set in California in the year 2048 that captures the two prominent social themes of environmental degradation and polarized political groups. Just like America, California has also broken into two parts, North and South. These two societies are divided according to their respective religious beliefs. The Southern California or the Southland has been overtaken by the racist and capitalist community of Stewards being supported by the religious community of Millenialists or the Christian Fundamentalists. On the other hand, Northern California or ‘the North’ as it is called, is an independent state that was not governed by any particular political party but managed by some female leaders who opt for an ecologically sound society about twenty years earlier. The people here believed in the four elements of Nature or the four ‘sacred things’: the Earth, fire, water and the air and are engrossed in their efforts to achieve perfection in their pursuit for the fifth sacred thing ‘the Spirit’. A spiritually perfected soul would ecologically connect them with their natural world. However, in the novel the characters hanker after spiritual perfection but are also vigilantly defending themselves from attacks from the outside by an extremist group called Stewards. They are engaged in a biological warfare against these ecotopians in order to gain control over them.

The plot of the novel revolves around the three central figures, the 98-year old Maya who is the dreamer, Bird who is the musician and Madrone who is the healer. Their names are symbolic of their character and roles they play in the novel. Maya as her name suggests, always remains lost in a reverie, or talks to the dead people. Bird is specialized in playing guitar hence the name of Bird symbolizes his interest in music and singing like a bird. Madrone is the name that has been taken from a sacred tree of the same name that grows in the rocky mountains of America. In the novel, the character Madrone works as a healer who is practising hard to become a spiritual healer. These characters live in the city of San Francisco that has been
developed into an ecotopian city with the combined efforts of the people. The city of San Francisco has been described by the author very picturesquely in the following lines: “The city was a mosaic of jewel-like colors set in green, veined by streams, and dotted with gleaming ponds and pools” (Starhawk 1). This city is completely based on a sustainable economy employing energy efficient methods such as wind power, solar power, local agriculture using organic methods, permaculture, etc. Every house grows its own food in small gardens and the streets are divided into narrow streams flowing along the gardens and pavements used for “bicycles and electric carts and the occasional horse” that move through “a labyrinth of narrow walkways that snaked and twined through the green” (1). There is no monopolized government, no privatization of food and water, food and fresh drinking water is available in surplus for everyone’s use. The society is based on the three ‘R’ economy: Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle; some of the characters are working in the way to add a fourth element to the three ‘R’ economy that is ‘Repair’ but in a very unusual manner, through the practices of spiritual healing. The inhabitants of this utopian society are working progressively to attain the heightened level in their spiritual energies called the life force or the ‘Chi’ Spirit, a Chinese term taken from traditional Chinese medicine that means aliveness, life force energy or life breath. This concept of the Life Force is common in most of the ancient cultures of the world, e.g., for Native Americans, it is the ‘Great Spirit’, and for Hindus, it is ‘Prana’, for the Japanese, it is ‘Qi’. In every one of these societies the possibility of the life force vitality is key to every one of their types of Medicine and recuperating, for example, Acupuncture, Ayurveda, T'ai Chi and Qi Gong. Everything in creation is comprised of electromagnetic vitality vibrating at various frequencies that relate to sound, light and shading. The presence of electromagnetic fields around each protest on the planet - known as an Aura - is a deductively demonstrated certainty. The Chinese allude to this vitality as “Chi” (articulated as Chee), the fundamental life compel vitality of the Universe, exhibit inside each living thing.
Western restorative science is presently starting to investigate antiquated Far Eastern conventions that emphasis on Chi, the life drive vitality which courses through the body pathways - known as meridians and chakras - of every single living structure, all creatures, keeping in mind the end goal to keep up wellbeing and health, rationally, physically, sincerely and profoundly. In the novel, the protagonist Madrone who is a medical healer attains a heightened level of life force energy through her constant practice. She uses this energy to heal and save the lives of the dying persons. In the beginning of the novel she exercises this energy upon a pregnant woman in her dying stage to save her and the baby in her womb through a meditative trance where “she took a deep breath and repeated her own secret rhyme that took her quickly into trance. Her body was like a tree with a hollow trunk; her roots could reach down to the great stores of ch‘i in the molten mantle of the Earth and bring it up” (Starhawk 4). But Madrone is capable of releasing her energies that “pulsed through her, moving from her hands” (4) into the body of woman “feeding her” and “keeping her alive” (4) till she delivers the baby. Madrone is able to develop an electromagnetic field around her body that helps in the healing of others’ illnesses.

Every character is engaged in a kind of warfare with his or her own self and the inner weaknesses. They want to achieve high ideals in order to create an eco-friendly and healthy environment around themselves but they are hurdles in their way by the outside evil forces engaged in a biological warfare. While addressing a crowd, Maya, a spiritual dreamer, explains the relevance of will power and dreams in resolving the conflicts whether they appear within or without:

All war is first waged in the imagination, first conducted to limit our dreams and visions, to make us accept within ourselves its terms, to believe that our only choices are those that lay before us. If we let the terms of force describe the terrain of our battle, we will lose. But if we
hold to the power of our visions, our heartbeats, our imagination, we can fight on our own turf, which is the landscape of consciousness. There, the enemy cannot help but transform. (Starhawk)

Starhawk in her novel, *The Fifth Sacred Thing*, depicts mutual interactions between humans and the Mother Earth. All the natural elements such as air, fire, water, and Earth that sustain life on Earth are considered sacred and holy in the North. The residents of this beautiful ecotopian place are busy in pursuing the fifth sacred element that is Spirit because they are conscious of this fact that all these four natural elements can be united only through a single strand of spiritual perfection. They are well aware of the fact that they can not own any of these natural elements. They reflect their deep reverence for these elements. This Northern ecological community has adopted an economical lifestyle living in constant harmony with the nonhuman world. Based on a self-sustained economy, it provides its people with enough means for their survival. Besides, this Northern part has been described as a beautiful place, rich in cultural diversity and natural resources that celebrates its natural vividness and diverse blend of races, religions, and heritages. On the other hand, the Southern region, known as Southland or the South, is governed by an authoritarian regime, the Stewards, who are religiously fanatic who levied strict laws upon their own people. They have institutionalized racism, sexism, and the oppression of the lower classes in order to exercise control and power over its people. There is widespread discrimination against women, poor people and people of colour who are regarded as inferior and second class citizens almost having no social power or rights. The Stewards have destroyed large tracts of agricultural farmlands, forests and pastures in exchange for industrial buildings and factories for their own material benefit. The prisoners are kept in stark cruelty and are made to work like beasts. Through this novel Starhawk conveys how the thoughtless use of toxic materials and natural resources, as well as harmful use of technology
like nuclear power is ruinous to the natural environment. The industrial waste from the chemical industries and factories contaminates water reservoirs in the city. These destructive human acts cause a huge damage to the inhabitants and the natural surroundings of the South.

_The Fifth Sacred Thing_ deals with all the major ecological themes such as the human and non-human relationship, environmental degradation, reconstruction of an ecotopian model, and eco-spirituality. Through the reading of the novel, it is noticeable that the Southern community indulges in severe environment degrading activities like water pollution, air contamination, deforestation, industrial establishments, use of nuclear power, weaponry and firearms, and huge toxic waste production. The culprits behind this attack upon the ecological world are the Stewards who want to rule authoritatively over both human and non-human beings. They have cut down all the woods and the jungles for industrial use and have replaced the large tracts of lands and open areas with new buildings, factories and shops. Besides, nuclear power stations have been established to produce nuclear power to be used as significant energy resource. They have also created lots of sophisticated and modern firearms for the sake of national security. Due to industrialization and production of nuclear waste, they have contaminated both landscapes and seawater. Besides this, the entire atmosphere is contaminated with the nuclear radiations causing considerable damage to the ozone layer that has made flying almost impossible. There is privatization of all the natural resources including water supplies that are being owned by the government and therefore not available for common people to use. Only the rich people have access to these scarce water supplies through ration system.

In the novel, there is a general awareness in the South that only in industrialized and technologically advanced societies people are able to live happily and comfortably. The author believes that the
consequences and ill effects of unsustainable development and ill-management of natural resources will lead to certain irreversible problems. This has been expressed clearly in the words of the character, Maya:

We old women have learned from our history and its mistakes. Many of you are too young to remember the wealth of the old society, the incredible resources, the power of technology, the firepower of its weaponry, the sheer abundance of things, so many that they could be shamelessly squandered and wasted. (Starhawk 238)

The novel clearly describes how the use of unsustainable technology in the South has brought huge negative impact within the society itself. Morton, who has escaped from the South and resides in the hills clearly illustrates this point, as he says: “we’re ... all born back when the old reactor was still running ... what the hell did they [the South government] care? Of course, you don’t see the ones who died of cancer” (92). Hence, it can be seen that cancer is considered to be a common disease among people and everybody is forced to take some prescribed pills called “boosters”, to immunize the body against these contagious or epidemic diseases.

In the novel, Starhawk presents a striking contrast between the two fictionalized worlds of the North and the South, providing the readers with the solutions for the emergent environmental issues for the maintenance of ecological equilibrium in the reimagining of the ecotopian society that has been created through the collective efforts and consent of the ecologically conscious individuals. In Madrone’s description of Utopia to the residents of the South, she tells about the five sacred things namely, Earth, air, fire, water and ether (spirit). These five sacred elements are respected and cannot be owned. Besides, there needs to develop right correspondence with these sacred elements, the community harping for a utopian state should, as Madrone says, “preserve them and protect them, never to waste them,
always to share what we have of them and to return all we take from them to the cycles of regeneration. Together, they form ... the cycle of life” (Starhawk 300). Hence, the author reflects her deep concern for the fate of this world and through the novel has stated two contrastive conditions, one for the good and the other one of evil nature for comparative analysis. In the novel, she maintains that relationship between humans and Nature should be based on sustainability mode of development inclusive of love and care for Nature. Contrary to this, the social development must not always depend upon taking and benefiting from Nature; Nature should be revered and respected and needs to be nurtured to preserve its copious growth. The lives of both human and non-human beings depend on natural environment. The people belonging to the ecological community of the North revere Nature and endeavour to compensate for the damages that have been done to the ecology over the years through following an eco-spiritual path of simple living. For example, through the planting of trees, the people of this utopian world walk up to the mountains every year to plant thousands of trees. To save their region from further pollution, they avoid the use of cars and prefer walking or use of either bicycles or public transport. It is noticeable that they care much for their natural environment and they have even discarded their luxurious lifestyle in favour of a discreet way of life that connects them with their natural world.

The novel also explores the significance of ecological sustainability as a way for society to “generate or save as much energy as it consumes and does not depend on non-renewable resources” (275). From this view it is ascertained that whatever has been taken or used from Nature such as natural resources should be returned back to it in order to avoid any destruction or waste of energy. The society in the North has utilized efficient construction methods and techniques for building houses and apartments. There are no elevators and air conditioning systems in high buildings; instead, windows have been installed for better ventilation of fresh breeze.
Moreover, the energies of currents and tides are tapped for the generation of electricity which is accompanied by solar panels and wind generators. In addition, bio-technology and eco-friendly materials such as wood, bamboo, adobe and straw have been utilized for creating efficient buildings. The bio-degradable plastics that are made of corn or soya are used and papers are not produced from trees but from the weed of hemp to avoid further destruction to Nature and its resources. Even more, a very progressive kind of computer technology exists in the North that operates on crystals. Although the people of the North use applied technology and energy that are designed to be modernized, yet they are also based on renewable resources. In the novel the people are made to occupy only that much space that does not waylay Nature and even technology is in compatibility with the environment preservation.

In Madrone’s words, in spite of all distinctions in individuals’ convictions in the Utopia, they have achieved agreement on regarding five consecrated things, earth, air, fire, water and spirit (Starhawk 300). In this manner, the lesson of Starhawk’s story is that by ensuring Nature and regarding each other, individuals of North could survive the biological emergencies after the uprising and could compose their property into a green and libertarian culture. As can be noticed in the novel, eco-spiritual presumptions underlie humans’ natural existence. The human beings’ mutual interactions with the natural world, reverence for its vivid diversity, and searching for divinity in Nature form an evident principle of tribal or natural communities. That’s why such societies are more eco-spiritual in tone and modality.

**Eco-Ethics and Ernest Callenbach’s *Ecotopia* (1975)**

Eco-ethics or the environmental ethics is a way of reflecting sympathies, care and concerns for the natural world that may lead the human beings to indulge in fruitful activities for the subsistence of all biotic as well abiotic components in the ecosphere thereby generating
a symbiotic relationship between man and Nature. The environmental ethics may play an essential role in today’s postmodern world where the society has completely been overtaken by the degenerative and regressive habits and values of modern living. There has been a great increase in the levels of mass natural degradation and pollution throughout the world that has led the eco-conscious people to spread a general awareness among people regarding the environmental issues and motivate them for partaking in the activities more conducive to the natural environment. Every society focuses upon its constant economic growth and development to achieve a stable state efficiency and to accelerate the pace of development they may even resort to ecologically unsound ways and activities; however for a positive social change, there is a need of adopting neat and clean habits in order to save the environment from disastrous repercussions. Still a greater need is there to rethink our present situation and take up a decisive step further to bring a transformation in the present social order and reinvigorate the dormant agrarian ideals through the creation of a new ecological society.

In order to recreate a society purely on the basis of ecological ideals there is a necessity to respond to the current situation and to establish new models for its growth and sustainable development. The sustainable development in any society calls for an overall growth and evolution in all spheres of socio-economic and political activity where the rights of the individuals matter equally to the affairs of the State and are taken into serious consideration. A State always needs a stable government for the proper functioning of its executive and legislative affairs. Besides this, sustainable development occurs only when a society conforms to the traditional norms of conduct and behaviour and serves not only in the interests of the human beings but also of the other natural organisms in an equal measure. Ernest Callenbach envisions a society modeled on the above mentioned norms. Ernest Callenbach’s novel *Ecotopia* (1975) is a novel that foretells the making of future utopian society that is modeled on the
principles of ecological sustainability, environmental ethics and deep ecological movement. This new society called Ecotopia has devised its economy based on Marxist ideals of classless society, common ownership, equal distribution of consumer goods, wealth and property. It has also adopted pagan from of spirituality, sustainable life-style and renewable energy resources. This society has seceded itself from the technologically advanced nation of United States, the three states, namely Oregon, Washington and San Francisco segregated themselves to form an ecotopian society. Will Weston, the journalist from America comes to this land to record the major growth models of sustainable development that have created this society. He acquaints himself of the lifestyle of Ecotopian people either through his own observations or through his meetings with Marissa, a medical intern student in Ecotopia who provides useful information to Weston about the lifestyle, culture and economy of her nation-state.

The field of eco-criticism tends to focus upon reflecting a greater view of ecological vision that looks forward for the sustenance of all life forms and the maintenance of a symbiotic relationship between human beings and Nature. It seeks to understand humans in correlation with their environment through literature who are considered to be an inseparable part of the Nature where both the human world and natural world are susceptible to each other. The eco-critical field also shows its deep concern for the present day issues of threat to wild life, like global warming, industrial pollution, depletion of natural resources, population explosion, etc.

Discussing the emergence of ecocriticism as a movement, Glotfelty distinguishes between “eco” and “enviro” as prefixes. “Enviro” she suggests implies that humans are at the center, surrounded by everything else. “Eco,” on the other hand, implies interdependence (xx). “Eco” also encourages considering Nature and culture as
interconnected parts of Earth’s ecology. (Habeeb and Habeeb 506)

Every society is prone to convulsions and changes at a very dynamic pace and the novel *Ecotopia* is a reactive response to the degenerative dystopian worldview which is detrimental to the dynamic growth of the ecological environment and the well being of the inhabitants. This novel is succeeded by its prequel *Ecotopia Emerging* (1981) that describes the fictionalized events that led to the secession of three states of Northern California, Oregon, Washington from the United States in order to create a steady-state ecological utopia along the coast of Pacific Ocean. It tells about the making of the state of Ecotopia and contains the fictionalized account of historical events, characters and places. Whereas the novel describes a set of eco-oriented people that have re-established their society in an ecologically efficient manner. The society has reformed its ways, attitudes and modes to live in consonance with the natural world. Nature has been restored and rehabilitated in its purest form.

In the contemporary concern on global warming and climate change, eco-critical theory stands out as a boon to social and cultural reform. Earth as the center of attention draws into its fold the myriad ecological aspects of life and ecocriticism serves as a catalyst toward making the Earth a greener and cleaner planet. (Habeeb and Habeeb 506)

The present research seeks to analyze Ernest Callenbach’s novel *Ecotopia* (1975) through the ecological perspective of a futuristic world where an idealistic society has been created purely upon the basis of utopian principles. The novel tends to subvert the already established norms of the present patriarchal and materialistic world. The ecologically blooming society has grown out of its peoples’ discontent and disillusionment with the degenerative workings of the present world. The name of this society is Ecotopia
created out of three states: Oregon, Washington and northern California that segregated themselves from the United States in 1980. This new nation is the outcome of degradation of both the modern individuals as well as the natural environment. The novel seems to incorporate the two disparate philosophies that is libertarianism and ecology whose respective concerns are quite different. While libertarianism is concerned solely with the human individual, the ecological philosophy has non-human world as its sole concern. The novelist blends/mixes these two ideological beliefs in the novel. Both the natural as well as the human world have been considered as valuable entities in their own right. Both these entities are depicted to be contributing significantly as mutual benefactors for the holistic development of the other. There seems to be a direct and coherent relationship between the humans and Nature. In the novel, the people don’t intrude into the sanctity of Nature. Nature is left to itself in order to flourish and grow in its soulful vivacity.

Ernest Callenbach tends to provide a solution for the current discordant worldview and degenerate society through this deeply eco-oriented sociological fiction Ecotopia. This Ecotopian society is built upon the principles of political decentralization where the government is run by women leaders with males acquiring lower governmental positions. This society is structured around the three foundational principles for a perfect society that are Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. The whole socio-economic set-up of this utopian world is based upon certain characteristics like the use of energy-efficient resources and eco-friendly materials, the adoption of Earth-centered approach, the preservation of economic and social stability, the reverence for Nature, and the abolishing of consumerist policies as well as materialistic practices. In a way, they have adopted ‘green economy’ and a ‘greener’ lifestyle as well as devised ‘greener’ technological methods for the conservation of the biodiversity. This has been conveyed through the observations of the reporter, Will
Weston, an American visitor who has been sent to this mysterious State by some American officials for an investigative assignment.

The novel provides an ecological vision of such a society that bestows its affectionate care upon both animate and inanimate Nature. This relationship between human society and Nature as well as human care for the natural things and its reflection through the works of art is what forms the core concept of study in eco-criticism. Eco-criticism is the newer and recent mode of critical approach that is established out of its deep interest in the variegated Nature-representations that occur in different forms of literature. The focal point of the study is to evaluate the ecological values that are rendered and exhibited distinctly in certain works of literature. These values are tinged with either the subjective or the objective considerations of the author. Certain instances of ecological crisis are occurring all over the world due to misappropriation of the natural resources. Joseph Meeker, in his *The Comedy of Survival: Literary Ecology and Play Ethics*, has proposed that:

... environmental crisis is caused primarily by a cultural tradition in the West of separation of culture from Nature and elevation of the latter to moral predominance. Meeker states: “Comedy illustrates that survival depends upon our ability to change ourselves rather than our environment, and upon our ability to accept limitations rather than to curse fate for limiting us” (21). In this foundational work on eco-critical theory, Meeker states that the tragic mode offers destructive aspects of western civilization while the comic mode offers redemption. (qtd. in Habeeb and Habeeb 505)

In the novel, an eco-region has been developed by the Nature-oriented group of people that have adopted an eco-friendly approach. They have created ecologically-sensitive districts where people have
adopted indigenous ways and manners and are closely interconnected with the world of natural environment.

The society that has been formed thereby executes its functions in the interests of the purer form of Nature. This natural society born out of its love for the environment relinquishes a more materialistic proclivity and commercialism of a highly sophisticated and civilized world of America. The consumerism of the ultra-developed societies of the West that has severed all the connections with the natural world and has discarded the laws of Nature going on in the pursuit of mutilating and exploiting Nature for its own vested interests has led a more sensitive section of those societies to revolt against it.

The eco-conscious people further the cause of a new society based purely upon the ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity and move constantly along with Nature without any intrusion/interference into the activities of both animate and inanimate world of ecological beings. It has also been shown how one can live self-sufficiently and comfortably even without all the material comforts of a luxurious life. The people in the land of Ecotopia aren’t so crazy to build their homes or farm-houses in a synthetic and sophisticated mode:

There were now more houses though rather scattered—many of them seeming to be small farms. The orchards, fields and fences looked healthy and surprisingly well cared for, almost like those of western Europe. Yet how dingy and unprosperous the farm buildings looked, compared to the white-painted farms of Iowa or New England! (Callenbach 10)

The Ecotopians never paint their homes as the paints contain chemicals that may degrade the environment. Either, they build their homes with wood, stones or weathered rocks that do not require them to be painted or they may conceal their homes with vines, and bushes.
For ecotopian people, the concern for beauty or aestheticism is of less importance than the concern for their immediate surroundings.

The novel clearly exemplifies the notion that self-sufficiency lies not in the luxury of life but merely in the supply of the basic necessities of life and in remaining intact with the roots of one’s natural existence. The Ecotopian society shows its great care and concern towards the natural surroundings that seem to be more luxurious than its own living. They have great reverence for the trees and forests for they don’t cut them indiscriminately and incessantly for material pursuits. Marissa, the main character in the novel also shows her deep concern for the trees and is associated with the lumber industry where wood is cut and used judiciously for commercial purposes. In this society, people use natural, renewable and bio-degradable products such as wood, clay, bio-degradable plastics, etc. but even for getting wood trees are cut in a more cautious way. The people here are bound by some ethical purview and a proper limit is set for the use of the things derived from Nature. “Wood is a major factor in the topsy-turvy Ecotopian economy, as the source not only of lumber and paper but also of some of the remarkable plastics that Ecotopian scientists have developed. Ecotopians in the city and country alike take a deep and lasting interest in wood. They love to smell it, feel it, carve it, polish it” (61). The Ecotopian people believed in the ethical principle that whatever is taken from Nature must be returned to it in the similar form as refreshed and pure as ever.

As the American investigator Will Weston steps onto the land of Ecotopians, he encounters a very contrastive world than his own. The ecotopians have completely metamorphosed the previous normative structure, political economy and devious ways of a corrupt and acquisitive society, that is, the United States. They have evolved their own modes of social behaviour and exchange and never indulge in abusive talk with the others. They greet others and the outsiders
with a smile on their face and talk nicely even if the other is talking rude to them. They have been described by the narrator, Will Weston as:

The Ecotopians are almost Dickensian: often strange enough, but not crazy looking or sordid, as the hippies of the sixties were. Fanciful hats and hairdos, jackets, vests, leggings, tights…. There’s a lot of embroidery and decorations made of small shells or feathers, and patchwork—cloth must be terribly scarce they go to such lengths as to re-use it. (10)

They have even banned the harmful or non-corrosive minerals and substances from any use in their own land instead they make use of corrosive metals like iron. The government of this society has also completely banned the use of non-degradable and non-recyclable materials or products like plastics, fossil-fuels, rubber, etc.

In Ecotopia, people have even discarded all of their ecocidal habits and activities in order to reincorporate a purer form of Nature into the lives of the humans that is no longer intruded upon by cultured Man and his inhumane activities. They live a very peaceful life in the lap of Nature and have developed new techniques that work in accordance with the laws of Nature. So, in a way, Ecotopians have created a ‘green’ society for themselves which could be described as “a society consisting of small-scale units, where people live their lives close to Nature and to each other, where technology was of the proper scale e.g. ‘adapted’ to its social and natural context” (qtd. in Spaargaren 42). As in Ecotopia, the whole social set-up makes use of energy-efficient resources that can be easily renewed and recycled, thus protecting the environment from any further harm. The energies which they produce out of such renewable resources are geo-thermal energy generated out of the Earth’s core, wind energy, solar energy, and energy produced through tidal waves and more. They have even
invented innovative processes and forms of energy-sources as has been observed by the narrator, William Weston in the novel:

The photosynthetic chemistry of a green growing plant, as is well known, enables the plant to capture solar energy and use it in the plant’s own growth. Ecotopian scientists believe they have now worked out a process whereby, in specially bred plants, this process could be electrically tapped directly. Such an unbelievably elegant system would be nearly perfect from an Ecotopian point of view: your garden could then recycle your sewage and garbage, provide your food, and also light your house! (Callenbach 115)

The ecotopian community has also employed ‘massive photo-cells’ which are used in satellites too, however enlarged in size and covering an area of “several miles on each side, perhaps, 20 or 30 miles in all” (113) that could easily generate “enough electricity for a chain of mini-cities” (113). So this instance shows that they have progressed a lot but they have not lost track of time. They are moving ahead but are well aware, though, of the value of time, shaping and molding themselves and the society in a manner that may help in creating a perfect as well as better times ahead.

Thus, it can be said that the eco-oriented people of Ecotopia are steadfastly following the eco-ethical beliefs for making the world around them move in a perfect harmony and consonance with the natural world without hurting and injuring it in the least. For the Ecotopians, “what matters most is the aspiration to live in balance with Nature, ‘walk lightly on the land’, treat the Earth as a mother. No surprise that to such a morality most industrial processes, work schedules, and products are suspect! Who would use an Earth-mover on his own mother?” (32). Thus the Ecotopian society seems to focus upon maintaining a symbiotic relationship between the world of Man and that of Nature. They have made their economic capacity or growth
compatible with sustainability and have recognized the “need for minimal international regulation, and make efforts to protect endangered ecosystems and species” (Redclift 152). They have restructured their socio-economic and political objectives according to the urgent need of the present times to protect and conserve the natural environment for sustaining all life-forms on the Earth’s ecosystem and create a mutual healthy relationship among all natural components for better survival.

All the four novels concentrate on distinct notions about the ecological world, a continuum of varied ideologies of both the dominating and subdued world of humans and non-humans respectively that exist simultaneously on this Earth. The rhythmic tones of Nature echo through these works. The writers have been quite successful in expressing the complicated issues of human existence in relation to the environment.
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