Chapter 2

Ecosocial Activism, Ecocriticism, the Role of Writers and the Language of Ecosocial activism: the Relevance

The promotion and protection of the environment, to a certain extent, depends on man’s actions and interactions with nature. The increase in population and the subsequent changes in the production and consumption pattern have exerted great pressure on the eco systems, necessitating curative measures by the environmentalists. Ecosocial activism represents dynamic actions by a person or group of people to transform the society and environment. Ecosocial activism believes that a reorganization of the political, social and economic systems would be more effective as opposed to environmentalism, which merely prioritises green issues within existing political and economic structures. The Encyclopædia Britannica defines an ‘Activist’ as a person who works to bring about political, environmental or social changes by campaigning in public or working for an organization¹.

Activism in a general sense can be described as an intentional action to bring about social, political or environmental change. This action is in support of, or opposition to, one side of an often controversial argument. The well known terms of activism and activists used in a practical manner first appeared in Belgium Press in 1916 in connection with the Flamingant Movement. (Waylon 12).

The word activism is often used synonymously with protest, dissent but activism can stem from any number of political, social or environmental orientations and take a

wide range of forms; from writing letters to newspapers, writing books and articles, making public speeches or even organizing rallies, marches, strikes or even guerilla tactics. In more confrontational cases an activist may be called a freedom fighter by some and terrorist by another, depending on whether the commentator supports the activist’s ends. In some cases activism has nothing to do with protest or confrontation; for instance, some religious, feminist, environmental or vegetarian activist try to persuade people to change the behaviour directly, rather than persuade government to change laws.

An eco-action has positive impact on the environment. For this reason it is often used as a synonym for environmental action. People adopting eco-actions tend to specifically target activities around the ‘Three Rs’ of the waste hierarchy, Reducing, Reusing and Recycling. They may decide to carry out small-scale eco-friendly actions such as reducing the volume of paper used in offices, or purchasing products only from companies that have environmentally friendly or sustainability policies. Others may adopt eco-actions that affect where they live by cleaning up beaches, removing graffiti, supporting community gardening, and re-planting coastal wetlands because the immediate community has come to be considered part of their ecosystem.

In order to conserve and protect the environment deliberate action required from the people. Social activism is an intentional action with the goal of bringing about social change.

If we define social justice as the belief in an equitable, compassionate world where difference is understood, valued and respected, then we can see that social

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<http://en.wikipedia.org/activism>
activism and social justice are flip sides of the same coin. Social action work is a way to meet the goal of social justice.³

The diverse faces of global environment changes are linked both scientifically and politically. Scientifically, the ability to predict future changes in the environment requires an understanding of physical, chemical, biological and social process that governs the earth system. Politically, option to address these problems highlights the need for coordinating international, national and regional policies relating to energy technology, land use and economic development.

‘Active or direct political involvement is especially important since most environmental quality conflicts are much less technically or economically determined than they are politically determined.’⁴ Since they are politically determined the concern for environmental issues is to be made by representatives of people to parliament and legislatures who have environmental awareness directed towards more comprehensive planning.

Environmental awareness among people all over the world is on the increase. Green politics, green policies, green technology, and green products have become common terms. Public opinion depends on public awareness motivated by the theoretical support of the scientists and activists.

Encyclopedia Britannica defines environmentalism as “Political and ethical movement that seeks to improve and protect the quality of the natural environment


⁴ Kumar,Devenra. ‘Where consumerism will take the country?’ Article in Hindi released by sarvodaya press Service on 20-07-1991.Print.
through changes to environmentally harmful human activities, through the adoption of the form of political, economic and social organization that are thought to be necessary or at least conducive to the benign treatment of the environment by humans: and through a reassessment of humanity’s relationship with nature. In various ways, environmentalism claims that living things other than humans, and the natural environment as whole are deserving of consideration in reasoning about the morality of economic, political and social policies.” Environmentalism is a concern for the preservation, restoration, or improvement of the natural environment, such as the conservation of natural resources, prevention of pollution, and certain land use actions. It often supports the struggle of indigenous peoples against the spread of globalization to their way of life, which is seen as less harmful to the environment.

Environmentalism is a broad philosophy, ideology and social movement regarding concerns for environmental conservation and improvement of the health of the environment, particularly as the measure for this health seeks to incorporate the concerns of non-human elements. Environmentalism advocates the preservation, restoration and/or improvement of the natural environment, and may be referred to as a movement to control pollution. At its crux, environmentalism is an attempt to balance relations between humanity and their broader organic and biogeochemical milieu in such a way that all the components are accorded a proper degree of respect.

Environmental thoughts and the various branches of environmental movement are often classified into two intellectual camps: those that are considered ‘anthropocentric’ or ‘human centered’ in orientation and those considered ‘bio-centric’ or ‘life centered’.

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Anthropocentric approaches focus mainly on the negative effects that environmental degradation has on human beings and their interests, including their interest in health, recreation and quality of life. It is often characterized by a mechanistic approach to non-human nature in which individual creatures and species have only an instrumental value for humans. The defining feature of ‘anthropocentrism’ is that it considers the moral obligation humans have to the environment which derives from the obligations that humans have to each other and less crucially, to future generations of human beings rather than from any obligation to other living things or to the environment as a whole. Human obligation to the environment is thus indirect.

Bio centric approach claims that nature has an intrinsic moral worth that does not depend on its usefulness to human beings and it is this intrinsic worth that gives rise directly to obligations to the environment. Humans are therefore morally bound to protect environment as well as individual creatures and species, for their own sake. In this sense, bio-centric views, human beings and other elements of the natural environment, both living and often non-living, are members of a single moral and ecological community.

The division between anthropocentric and bio-centric approaches played a central role in the development of environmental thought in the late twentieth century. Whereas some earlier schools, such as apocalyptic (survivalist) environmentalism – as well as its off shoot, human welfare ecology- were animated primarily by a concern for human well being, later movements including social, ecology, deep ecology, the animal rights and animal liberation movements, and ecofeminism, were centrally concerned with the moral worth of non-human nature.
Apocalyptic Environmentalism was developed in the Anthropocentric schools of thought. The vision of the environmental movement of the 1960s and early 70’s was generally pessimistic, reflecting a pervasive sense of “civilization malaise” and a conviction that the Earth’s long-term prospects were bleak. Works such as Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* (1962), Garrett Hardin’s *The Tragedy of the Commons* (1968), Paul Ehrlich’s *The Population Bomb* (1968), Donella H. Meadows’ *The Limits to Growth* (1972), and Edward Goldsmith’s *Blueprint for Survival* (1972) suggested that the planetary ecosystem was reaching the limits of what it could sustain. This so-called apocalyptic, or survivalist, literature encouraged reluctant calls from some environmentalists for increasing the powers of centralized governments over human activities deemed environmentally harmful, a viewpoint expressed most vividly in Robert Heilbroner’s *An Inquiry into the Human Prospect* (1974), which argued that human survival ultimately required the sacrifice of human freedom. Counterarguments, such as those presented in Julian Simon and Herman Kahn’s *The Resourceful Earth* (1984), emphasized humanity’s ability to find or to invent substitutes for resources that were scarce and in danger of being exhausted. (Gould, Early Green Politics 15).

Beginning in the 1970s many environmentalists attempted to develop strategies for limiting environmental degradation through recycling, the use of alternative-energy technologies, the decentralization and democratization of economic and social planning and, for some, a reorganization of major industrial sectors, including the agriculture and energy industries. In contrast to apocalyptic environmentalism, so-called “emancipatory environmentalism” took a more positive and practical approach, one aspect of which was the effort to promote an ecological consciousness and an ethic of “stewardship” of the
environment. One form of emancipatory environmentalism, human-welfare ecology—which aims to enhance human life by creating a safe and clean environment—was part of a broader concern with distributive justice and reflected the tendency, later characterized as “post materialist,” of citizens in advanced industrial societies to place more importance on “quality-of-life” issues than on traditional economic concerns. Emancipatory environmentalism also was distinguished for some of its advocates by an emphasis on developing small-scale systems of economic production that would be more closely integrated with the natural processes of surrounding ecosystems. This more environmentally holistic approach to economic planning was promoted in work by the American ecologist Barry Commoner and by the German economist Ernst Friedrich Schumacher. In contrast to earlier thinkers who had downplayed the interconnectedness of natural systems, Commoner and Schumacher emphasized productive processes that worked with nature, not against it, encouraged the use of organic and renewable resources rather than synthetic products (e.g., plastics and chemical fertilizers), and advocated renewable and small-scale energy resources (e.g., wind and solar power) and government policies that supported effective public transportation and energy efficiency. The emancipatory approach was evoked through the 1990s in the popular slogan, “think globally, act locally.” (Morley Web). Its small-scale, decentralized planning and production has been criticized, however, as unrealistic in highly urbanized and industrialized societies.

An emphasis on small-scale economic structures and the social dimensions of the ecological crisis also is a feature of the school of thought known as social ecology, whose major proponent was the American environmental anarchist Murray Bookchin. Social
ecologists trace the causes of environmental degradation to the existence of unjust, hierarchical relationships in human society, which they see as endemic to the large-scale social structures of modern capitalist states. Accordingly, they argue, the most environmentally sympathetic form of political and social organization is one based on decentralized small-scale communities and systems of production. (Bookchin, Social ecology and communalism 34-45).

A more radical doctrine, known as deep ecology, builds on preservationist themes from the early environmental movement. Its main originators, the Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess, the American sociologist Bill Devall, and the American philosopher George Sessions, share with social ecologists a distrust of capitalism and industrial technology and favour decentralized forms of social organization. Deep ecologists also claim that humans need to regain a “spiritual” relationship with nonhuman nature. By understanding the interconnectedness of all organisms—including humans—in the ecosphere and empathizing with nonhuman nature, they argue, humans would develop an ecological consciousness and a sense of ecological solidarity. The biocentric principle of interconnectedness was extensively developed by British environmentalist James Lovelock, who postulated in *Gaia: A New Look at Life on Earth* (1979) that the planet is a single living, self-regulating entity capable of reestablishing an ecological equilibrium, even without the existence of human life. Despite their emphasis on spirituality, some more extreme forms of deep ecology have been strongly criticized as anti-humanist, on
the ground that they entail opposition to famine relief and immigration and acceptance of large-scale losses of life caused by AIDS and other pandemics. 6

Environmentalism denominates a social movement that seeks to influence the political process by lobbying, activism, and education in order to protect natural resources and ecosystems. An environmentalist is a person who may speak out about our natural environment and the sustainable management of its resources through changes in public policy or individual behavior. This may include supporting practices such as informed consumption, conservation initiatives, investment in renewable energy, improved efficiencies in the materials economy, transitioning to new accounting paradigms such as Ecological economics and renewing and revitalizing our connections with non-human life. In various ways (for example, grassroots activism and protests), environmentalists and environmental organizations seek to give the natural world a stronger voice in human affairs. (Bookchin 67-68).

In order to overcome the evil effects of the environmental degradation and the kind of development taking place in the world, experts have recommended ‘sustainable development.’ It is defined as a process of change in which exploitation of resources, the direction of investments, the re-orientation of technology development, and the institutional changes are all in harmony and enhance both current and future potentials to meet human needs and aspirations. In other words, it is the kind of development that takes place without hampering the environment and without compromising with the needs of the future generations. It is a process of growth in harmony with nature and concerned with the future.

Sustainable development is understood to be a real remedy for the problems which industrialization has given rise to. For, it puts a check on the tendency of industrialized countries to produce more and consume more. It can be a real remedy also because it pre-supposes the promotion of values which encourage consumption standards that are within the bounds of what is ecologically possible and to which all can reasonably aspire. The concept of sustainable development also implies equity between rich and poor and between generations and the protection of the environment resources so that it can support growth over a long period of time. In other words what sustainable development implies is not the cessation of economic growth; rather, what it recognizes is that the problems of poverty and unemployment cannot be solved without the introduction of new understanding of growth. To give new understanding of growth is also absolute necessary because the existing systems of development are not really sustainable. To make our overall growth sustainable, what is required is a change of attitude towards our very life style. (Gould 15 -19).

The idea of sustainable development is a clear sign that the eco-awareness among the people and among the governments is fast growing. Various governmental and non-governmental agencies and movements have contributed to this growth of eco-awareness. Environmental Movements at the international level such as United Nations Environment programme, International Union for conservation of Natural Resources, Earth Watch, Friends of the Earth International, are very active today. These organizations provide a wide range of skills for an effective environmental awareness action. These international bodies are engaged in environmental protection and education. Their serious efforts
indicate that there is a growing realization all over the world that investments in the environmental protection are a necessary condition for human progress.

In India also there are numerous environmental movements aimed at the protection of environment. These movements foster environmental consciousness. Responding to the demands made by the environmental movement the government also enacted a number of laws with a view to protect and improve the quality of the environment and to prevent, control and reduce environmental pollution. (Arora 3).

Environmental and ecological movements are among the important examples of the collective actions of several social groups. Protection and recognition of constitutional and democratic rights, which are not defined by law but form an important part of the day to day living of the subaltern masses like the control over their resources, the right of indigenous people to preserve their culture, protection of environment and maintenance of ecological balance are significant concerns of these movements, as they affect the human life to a great extent. These movements also reflect an enlarged vision of economics and politics. Economic justice sought by these movements does not mean mere distribution of resources but encompass a larger vision like enhancement in the quality of life through recognition of people’s right over their natural resources, their right to live with dignity, and their participation in decision-making. The concerns of human environment received spectacular attention of scholars following the conclusion of the United Nations Conference on Human Environment, Stockholm in 1972.

By the 1980s the “green movement” became a worldwide phenomenon encompassing various countries of the world including India. It is signified by several
movements of people for the protection of their environmental and ecological rights in
India, ‘eco-greens’ or ‘green movement’ in Germany and North America. While
agrarian or working class movements have had a long historical trajectory, environmental
or ecological movements gained worldwide attention only in the second half of the
twentieth century. These movements focus not only on basic survival issues but also on
larger ecological concerns. These are different from earlier social movements and there is
need to understand them in terms of their nature and strategies. Various scholars have
tried to understand and analyse these movements in diverse ways. In general these
movements are grouped under tribal and peasant movements and as well under New
Social movements. This is so because ecological aspects are generally associated with
peasant and tribals whose survival is associated with the state of natural resources like
forests, water etc. Some treat them as middle class or elite movements as the
problems and concerns of the local communities, indigenous people or non–tribal poor are generally articulated by the urban middle class elite. In fact, there has been
no single unified and homogenous environmental discourse in India. There has been
what Guha calls ‘varieties of environmentalism’. (Guja14-22).

The idea of protection and preservation of environment existed in India from time
immemorial, till the industrialization and globalization began to exploit the natural
resources for their corporate greed. While discussing about the environmental movements
in India Justice V R Krishna Iyer made the following observation; “In India, since Vedic
times, mountains rivers, trees, flora and fauna have been worshipped as gods, not out of
superstitious ignorance but because they constitute a life-giving force, sustaining the
ecology for this space ship earth….. the rig Veda praises the beauty of ‘ushas’ (dawn)
and worships nature in all its glory. And yet, today, a bath in the holy Ganges is a sin against bodily health, not a salvation for the soul. Man, as the final value of social progress, manacled by the industrial mafia” (112).

The Indian view towards nature or environment in the past and present can be obviously seen by going through these lines. For the ancient Indians, ‘Ushas’ was a noble lady who comes tending everything carefully rousing every footed creature and makes the birds fly. But for today’s Indians ‘Ushas’ is not at all noble lady since man cannot even see his fellow being clearly in the early morning due to the smog and mist formed as a result of industrialization.

Manu, the ancient law giver, is considered to be the first Indian environmentalist, for he prescribed punishment for cutting trees. (Jaishankar Web). Kautilya (300 BC), the ancient political philosopher, was also interested in the conservation of forests. The Emperor Ashoka (240 BC) recognized the importance of balance of nature as well as the aesthetic and cultural values of environment and declared wild life should be preserved. (Arora, 14-15).

The traditionally fostered environmental consciousness in India began to decline with the increase in population and problems of food housing and raw materials. According to U K Gopalan, ‘…environmental deterioration in India began as early as fourteenth century. Later the British Government and then the Government of India accelerated the environmental degradation process in India. In fact there was no ecological consciousness at that time. It was best expressed by a local farmer on the occasion of commissioning of Nagarjuna Sagar Project in Andhra Pradesh, when he said to Jawaharlal Nehru, ‘…You lighted lamps in our homes’, little knowing that his children
were soon going to suffer from a disease called ‘kock-knee’, the disease had been traced to a change in the fluoride content of the field that came to be irrigated soon afterwards. (Gopalan 5).

Kenya also has almost the same story to tell about its degradation of environment. The pre-colonial period in Kenya was characterized by a great amount of wildlife and plant species as well as human communities that sustained themselves and their environment for themselves and for posterity. The communities and the environment did not co-exist easily but the pre-colonial people purposefully made use of certain land management strategies, forms of traditional knowledge and mutually beneficial relationships with various cultural groups to maintain ecological and socio-cultural sustainability. Therefore, as Wamalwa in her examination of traditional natural resource management systems in Eastern Africa indicates, Kenyan pre-colonial society was geared towards conservation (154).

Moreover, during pre-colonial Kenya, land was communally owned through indigenous forms of land tenure and natural resource management systems. Individuals did not have private rights to land. Instead, a political group or lineage authority was responsible for ensuring all community members had fair access to the land. The fair allocation was done through clan lineage. Each clan was given specific areas and all the members, including the women who were married to members of the clan, were able to acquire land for use. This ensured that every household had access to plots in diverse micro-ecosystems in the area. Kenyan traditional societies therefore tended to reinforce holistic Views of the world and encouraged techniques that would lead to sustainable resource management for years prior to British colonial rule. These techniques did not
require much in terms of specialization of occupation, though differentiation of occupations did exist between men and women.

The indigenous systems of ecological and social sustainability were disrupted by British colonial rule. The industrial development in Europe necessitated permanent occupation of the colonies by colonial powers and the destruction of the local natural economy. The old world order of cooperation between humans and nature was replaced by a mechanistic worldview of modern science, which led to the death of nature by sanctioning unchecked commercial and industrial expansion consequently leading to environmental destruction. British colonial efforts in Kenya were therefore based on a patriarchal and capitalist socio-economic ideological framework that emphasised the domination and domestication of nature and the imposition of extractive and exploitative relationships that benefited British economic and technological expansion at the expense of the sustainability of human and natural resources. The concept of nature as a resource to be dominated and exploited for human beings was imposed upon the Kenyan land during the British colonial period with far-reaching consequences. Kanogo points out that in this regard, the colonial period was characterized by a reorganization of traditional land tenure and agricultural systems and a massive redistribution of land for the benefit of white settlers that had devastating effects on the majority of Kenyan rural communities (Kanogo 86).

During the colonial rule, the British government allocated themselves land, which they referred to as the White highlands. The Colonial Land Acts resulted in the repossession of communal land considered uncultivated and uninhabited by the British from Kenyans and made it government property. The colonial government then
introduced individual land ownership by demarcating land and issuing title deeds. Consequently, many people were dispossessed of their community land and were denied user rights when the European settlers legitimated their ownership through colonial legislation. Demarcation of land complicated peoples’ lives in that they could no longer freely harvest branches from trees for firewood, as they were now privately owned under English law. Before the Land Adjudication Acts in Kenya of the 1950s, collecting fuel wood was a free, communal act and there was little or no commercialization of fuel wood or charcoal (Challenges for Africa 156).

Further to this, the disruption of a collective land-tenure system and of fallow shifting cultivation interfered with the free access to land use enjoyed by women through their lineage or man-image. Colonialism therefore denied women land and tree rights. These changes severely influenced natural resource management, agricultural practices and women's access to fuel wood.

According to Emmon the most destructive aspect of colonialism was the internalization of colonial and capital-centered worldviews by the Kenyan people. The colonial administrators ensured that the indigenous governments who took over the government, embraced capitalist principles of socio-economic organization and would therefore continue supplying Britain with resources and cheap exports. This served to create internal colonies and perpetuate old colonial relationships. The end of the colonial period therefore did not lead to the end of British exploitation of Kenyan resources, human labour and systems of production. Consequently, Kenya has continued to relate with Britain in a way to preserve British capitalist interests and socioeconomic dominance in the global economy. (Emmons Web) Kenya's postcolonial Presidents have
been effective in perpetuating capital-based dependency relationships between the North and the South in the postcolonial era. This is evidenced by the economic policies instituted under the Kenyatta and Moi regimes, which favoured foreign investments, foreign ownership of resources and capitalist principles of production and resource exploitation in Kenya. These policies have led to environmental degradation and impoverishment in Kenya. Etkins corroborates that resource extraction does not benefit indigenous people but the wealthy governments and foreign companies and the elites of the South resulting in great disparities in resource and income distribution. The diversion of natural resources to market economies then generates a scarcity for ecological stability and creates new forms of poverty. Consequently, policies favouring foreign ownership of resources lack sustainable solutions to the problems of the majority of the Kenyan people, especially the ones living in the rural areas. (Etkins 36).

**Environmental Movements in India: Issues and Concerns:** The environmental movement is a broad generic term which is generally used to describe and understand different types of local struggles and conflicts concerned with livelihood issues and ecological security within the larger context of the development debate. These struggles in fact critiqued and questioned the notion of development and conservation ecology pursued by the Indian state and its officials since colonial time. The genesis of the environmental movement in India can be traced to the Chipko movement (1973), (Shiva Web) in Garhwal region in Uttranchal. In fact, between 1970s and 1980s there were several struggles in India around issues of rights to forest and water which raised larger ecological concerns like rights of communities in forest resources, sustainability of large scale environmental projects like...
dams, issues of displacement and rehabilitation etc. The Indian environmental movement is critical of the colonial model of development pursued by the post–colonial state.

The post–independent state failed to build up a development agenda based on the needs of the people and continued to advocate the modern capitalist agenda which led to the destruction of environment, poverty and marginalisation of rural communities. Formation of national parks, sanctuaries, protected areas in India, in fact represents the conventional environmentalism which the Indian state advocated with the aim of preserving wildlife and biodiversity by pushing people out of these areas. In response to this conventional environmentalism which considered the Indian state to be the custodian of natural resources, the environmental movement in India advocated the ideology of ‘environmentalism of the poor’. It not only criticized modern developmentalism but also strongly advocated the revival of traditional ‘self–sufficient village economy’. It brought communities to the centre stage of Indian environmental discourse. The environmentalist stated that local communities were best suited to conserve natural resources as their survival depended in the sustainable use of such resources. They argued that in order to make the sustainable use of the resource the customary rights or traditional rights should be given back to the people which were taken away by the State, and traditional institutions should also be recognised. In a nutshell, the environmental movement in India concentrates on the issue of equity in relation to access and use of natural resources. Unlike in the West, a significant characteristic of environmental movements in India is that they have mainly involved the women, the poor and disadvantaged masses who have
been directly affected by or are victims of environmental degradation. Thus these movements are primarily political expressions of the struggle of local communities and people who are victims of environmental degradation or abuse of resources.

Gadgil and Guha identify four broad strands within the environmental movements in India based on vision, ideology and strategy. (26-31). The first types are those which emphasise on the moral necessity to restrain overuse and ensure justice to the poor and marginalised. Gandhians mainly belong to this strand. The second strand stresses on the need to dismantle the unjust social order through struggle. Marxists mostly follow this strand. The third and fourth strands advocate reconstruction, i.e. employing technologies appropriate to the given context and time. They reflect the concerns of the scientists or the spontaneous efforts of the communities at the village level who aim at protecting local community forests or the right to pursue environment-friendly agricultural practices.

Based on these principles, environmental movements in India grew in the 1970s and 1980s building upon the work of thousands of civil society groups and individuals spread across the country. These groups responded to the weaknesses of democratic governance processes in the country. In the subsequent years, environmental movements have received considerable support both from the media and the judiciary. Its relationship with the political and bureaucratic systems, on the other hand, remains weak and often antagonistic. But given the availability of ‘democratic space’ within the country, the environmental movement has grown rapidly over the last three to four decades. It has played a key role in three areas: (i) in creating public awareness about the importance of
bringing about a balance between environment and development; (ii ) in opposing
development projects that are inimical to social and environmental concerns; and (iii ) in
organising model projects that show the way forward towards non-bureaucratic and
participatory, community-based natural resource management systems.\(^7\)

India has witnessed a wide range of environmental movements such as Silent
Valley Movement in Kerala, Chipko Movement in Uttar Pradesh, Appiko Movement in
Karnataka, Narmada Bachano Andolan in Central India, Gandhamardhan Movement in
Orissa, Bhishnoi Movement in Rajasthan etc , which aim at halting environmental
degradation or bringing about environmental restoration or regeneration or sustainable
use of natural resources.

**Urban-based Environmental Movements**: In the recent past environmental
pollution caused due the industrialisation has become the focus of collective action by the
civil society organisations, NGOs, concerned individuals, especially lawyers,
scientists, environmentalists and social activists. They sought the intervention of
the judiciary and drew the attention of the state for showing concern to the pollution
caused by the process of modernisation. However, the main focus of the collective action
against pollution has been in the urban areas. Certain tragedies like gas leakage
thousands of people were killed created worries among the people on the negative effect
of the industrialisation.\(^8\) Though the 1990s have seen increased concern about the
environmental pollution, awareness about the disastrous impact of the environmental

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<http://www.123helpme.com/View.asp?id=26974>

\(^8\) 28 years of agony…corporate personhood in view of Bhopal gas tragedy.30 November 2012.Web 20
pollution started growing in the 1960s. All the major cities of India are facing acute air, water and other kinds on environmental pollution. Continuous immigration of the people from rural areas into the cities, their habitat in the congested areas which exist along with the polluting small scale industries, increasing number of vehicles and unplanned expansion of cities, open drainage, etc. have created levels environmental hazards. This pollution made people susceptible to multiple diseases. The protection of environment did not form a significant part of the policies of the state.

The Nehruvian model gave more emphasis to the industrialisation without showing much concern for the pollution it was going to create. However, in 1976 a Constitutional Amendment called upon the state ‘to protect and improve the environment and to safeguard the forest and wildlife of the country’ and made the fundamental duty of every citizen ‘to protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers and wildlife, and to have compassion for living creatures’. In the following decades the State passed legislations to prevent air pollution and environmental protection like The Air Act of 1981 and Environmental Protection Act of 1986. The judiciary has become the arbiter of people’s rights which include their protection from environmental degradation also since the emergence of the device of the Public Interest Litigation (PIL). In the face of indifference of the executive and legislature about the people’s problems, the PIL has become an effective weapon through which people seek the intervention of the state on these issues. (Arora 26).

The intervention of the judiciary forced the state to introduce some measures for prevention of environmental pollution. Justice Krishna Iyer, Justice Kuldeep Singh and
advocate MC Mehta have made remarkable contribution in the protection of the environment. As an instance Delhi is one of the most polluted cities in the world. Three issues related to the environmental pollution have been in focus of activities of some concerned of the civil society components in the recent past. These are air pollution caused due to the vehicular emissions, industrial pollution and water pollution in Yamuna river. The number of private and public vehicles has increased many folds in the recent past. This has polluted the environment and made people, especially children and old vulnerable to multiple diseases. Reacting to the court order which was the result of a PIL the government made it compulsory to introduce CNG vehicles and make pollution check mandatory for all private vehicles. The introduction of CNG vehicles has resulted in the reduction of the environmental pollution in the city. Similarly, the Delhi government has been forced to shift the polluting industries out of the city and launch the Yamuna River cleaning operation. The migration to the cities from the villages is inevitable. Unless some measures are adopted to absorb the migrating population, and increasing usage of the vehicles is stopped, it seems the environmental pollution will remain.9

The nature based conflicts, the false developmental policies of the government, the marginalization of tribal and other underprivileged groups and environmental degradation are the root causes of emergences of environmental movements in India. The lopsided, iniquitous and environmentally destructive process has propelled the people to go against the states in many cases and this leads to the emergence of environmental

movements in the country. The risks on the survival hood of the marginalised people due to the above mentioned factors had resulted in the emergence of these movements. Therefore the points comes that the environmental movements in different parts of the country grow out of the distribution conflict over the ecological resources needed for livelihood. Many of the environmental movements in India are the resistances by the people for their livelihood and survival.

These environmental movements found support from almost all sections of the society who were worried about the state of affairs of the environment, especially writer activists like Vandana Shiva and Arundhati Roy. Their literature and discursive writings were instrumental in establishing Ecosocial movements like The Green Belt Movement in Kenya, Navadanya Movement and Narmada Bachao Andolan in India. These Ecosocial Movements brought about social, economical, political and ecological changes in the Society by empowering the women, farmers and the socially and economically downtrodden people. Hence, this thesis is attempt to study the eco social activism in the selected works of the above mentioned ecosocial activists.

**Ecocriticism , Theories on Environmental Activism and the role of writer Activists**

Nature and literature have always shared a close relationship as it is evidenced in the works of poets and other writers down the ages in almost all cultures of the world. The poems of William Wordsworth, Robinson Jaffers, Willain Stafford are examples. Robinson Jaffers, describing the relation, writes in his Poem *Beauty of Things*. 
To feel and speak the astonishing beauty of things—earth, stone and water, 
Beast, man and woman, sun, moon and stars—
The blood-shot beauty of human nature, its thoughts, frenzies and passions, 
And inhuman nature its towering reality—
For man’s half dream; man, you might say, is nature dreaming, but rock 
And water and sky are constant—to feel 
Greatly, and understand greatly, and express greatly, the natural 
Beauty, is the sole business of poetry. 
The rest’s diversion: those holy or noble sentiments, the intricate ideas, 
The love, lust, longing: reasons, but not the reason. (12)

William Wordsworth in his famous poem “Daffodils” writes

I wandered lonely as a cloud 
That floats on high o’er vales and hills, 
When all at once I saw a crowd, 
A host, of golden daffodils; 
Beside the lake, beneath the trees, 
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze. 

For oft, when on my couch I lie 
In vacant or in pensive mood, 
They flash upon that inward eye 
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils. (25)

Speaking about the human intervention in nature and the destruction of the environment William Stafford in his poem, Traveling through the Dark, writes:

Traveling through the dark I found a deer
dead on the edge of the Wilson River road.
It is usually best to roll them into the canyon:
that road is narrow; to swerve might make more dead.

By glow of the tail-light I stumbled back of the car
and stood by the heap, a doe, a recent killing;
she had stiffened already, almost cold.
I dragged her off; she was large in the belly.

My fingers touching her side brought me the reason—
her side was warm; her fawn lay there waiting,
avive, still, never to be born.
Beside that mountain road I hesitated.

The car aimed ahead its lowered parking lights;
under the hood purred the steady engine.
I stood in the glare of the warm exhaust turning red;
around our group I could hear the wilderness listen. (Friedrich 56)
The relationship between human societies and nature has historically shaped the way we see the world and our actions towards it. Nature and culture converge on many levels that span values, beliefs and norms to practices, livelihoods, knowledge and languages. As a result, there exists a mutual feedback between cultural systems and the environment, with a shift in one often leading to a change in the other. The importance of this interaction is increasingly recognised, even in industrial societies and in urban areas where people are increasingly disconnected from their natural resource base. Human societies have, after all, engaged with nature through adaptive and co-evolutionary processes for thousands of generations. This connection with nature is reflected in all cultures today by our long history of developing regimes and rules in various attempts to protect or preserve natural places.

Today the intimate relationship between the natural and social world is being analyzed and emphasized in all departments of knowledge and development. The literary critic tries to study how this close relationship between nature and society has been textualized by the writers in their works. In this context two terms have become very important today – ecology and ecocriticism. Ecocriticism is an omnibus term most commonly used to refer to environmentally oriented study of literature and (less commonly) other expressive media, including the critical premises informing such study.

Since prehistory, literature and the arts have been drawn to portrayals of physical environments and human-environment interactions. The modern environmentalist movement as it emerged first in the late nineteenth century and, in its more recent incarnation, in the 1960s, gave rise to a rich array of fictional and non-fictional writings concerned with humans’ changing relationship to the natural world. Only since the early
1990s, however, has the long-standing interest of literature studies in these matters generated the initiative most commonly known as “ecocriticism,” an eclectic and loosely coordinated movement whose contributions thus far have been most visible within its home discipline of literature but whose interests and alliances extend across various art forms and media. In such areas as the study of narrative and image, ecocriticism converges with its sister disciplines in the humanities: environmental anthropology, environmental history, and environmental philosophy.

The two components of nature, organisms and their environment are not only much complex and dynamic but also interdependent, mutually reactive and interrelated. Ecology relatively a new science, deals with the various principles which govern such relationships between organisms and environment (Sharma 1-2). Today ecology is defined as the way in which plants, animals and people are related to each other and their environment. In this relationship they are so much interdependent on each other that any disturbance in one disturbs the other. History has proved this every now and then that with every change in the civilization the relationship of animals and human beings have also changed and the effect on civilisation of the changes in environment has been so acute that sometimes it has wiped the whole civilisation from the face of the earth. Therefore, concern for ecology is one of the most discussed issues today. It is the concern of every country to replenish the diminishing factors of ecology which threatens human beings the most. Literature well known for reflecting the contemporary issues could not have remained unaffected from this theme. The world of literature throngs with works dealing with beauty and power of nature. However, the concern for ecology and the threat that the continuous misuse of our environment poses on humanity has only recently
caught the attention of the writers. It is this sense of concern and its reflection in literature that has given rise to a new branch of literary theory, namely Ecocriticism.

Literature and environment studies—commonly called ecocriticism or environmental criticism in analogy to the more general term literary criticism—comprise an eclectically, plurally, and cross-disciplinary initiative that aims to explore the environmental dimensions of literature and other creative media in a spirit of environmental concern not limited to any one method or commitment. (Glotfelty 415). Ecocriticism begins from the conviction that the arts of imagination and the study thereof—by virtue of their grasp of the power of word, story, and image to reinforce, enliven, and direct environmental concern—can contribute significantly to the understanding of environmental problems: the multiple forms of eco-degradation that afflict planet Earth today. In this, ecocriticism concurs with other branches of the environmental humanities—ethics, history, religious studies, anthropology, humanistic geography—in holding that environmental phenomena must be comprehended, and that today’s burgeoning array of environmental concerns must be addressed qualitatively as well as quantitatively. At least as fundamental to their remediation as scientific breakthroughs and strengthened regimes of policy implementation is the impetus of creative imagination, vision, will, and belief. Even though, as the poet W.H. Auden famously wrote, “poetry makes nothing happen” (Tony 151) in and of itself, the outside-the-box thought experiments of literature and other media can offer unique resources for activating concern and creative thinking about the planet’s environmental future. By themselves, creative depictions of environmental harm are unlikely to free societies from lifestyles that depend on radically transforming ecosystems. But reflecting on works of
imagination may prompt intensified concern about the consequences of such choices and possible alternatives to them. Literature well known for reflecting the contemporary issues could not have remained unaffected from this theme.

Ecocriticism has grown exponentially from its inception in the early 1990s as an organized initiative. The Association for the Study of Literature and Environment\textsuperscript{10} has become a worldwide movement with chapters throughout Europe, East and South Asia, and Australia-New Zealand, though scholars from the Anglophone world, especially the United States and the United Kingdom, still predominate. (Garrard 203).

The word ‘ecocriticism’ first appeared in William Rueckert’s essay “\textit{Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism}” in 1978. Yet apparently it remained inactive in critical vocabulary until the 1989 Western Literature Association meeting (Kumari Web) (in Loeur d’ Alene), when Cheryll Glotfelty had not only revived the term but also worked for its use in the critical field which hereafter been used as the study of \textit{nature writing}. Glen Love too seconded the call for ‘ecocriticism’ at the same WLA meeting. Since that meeting in 1989 the usage of the term ‘ecocriticism’ has bloomed.

At present ecocriticism is in full swing and is a readily accepted theory worldwide. It is said to be the study of the relationship between literature and the environment. Its practitioners explore human attitudes toward the environment as expressed in nature writing. It is a broad genre that is known by many names like green cultural studies, ecopoetics and environmental literary criticism, which are some popular names for this relatively new branch of literary criticism. Literary criticism in general examines the relations between writers, texts and the “\textit{the world}”. In most literary theory

“the world” is synonymous with society - the social sphere. (Reif 117). Ecocriticism expands the notion of “the world” to include the entire ecosphere. Ecocriticism takes an earth centered approach to literary criticism. Ecocritics and theorists are concerned with the questions if the nature is being represented in a piece of literature or if the physical setting has a role in the plot or if the values expressed in the work is consistent with the ecological wisdom. They also examine that in addition to race, class and gender, in what ways and to what effect the environment crisis is seeping into contemporary literature and popular culture. Literary scholars specialise in questions of value, meaning, tradition, point of view, and language and it is in these areas that we are making a substantial contribution to environmental thinking. (Reif 117).

Ecocriticism, brings together environmental and literary studies. An early and commonly cited source defines the term ecocriticism as “the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment” when such study moves beyond treating the environment as background (setting) or symbol. (Glotfelty xviii.) While ecocriticism remains closely associated with literary studies, the term ecocriticism is increasingly also used to denote work in other disciplines focused on issues of environmental representation (work often influenced by literary and critical theory). Ecocriticism has always had an interdisciplinary component, although the necessary relationship between ecocriticism and science (especially ecology) has been complicated, and is also closely associated with political advocacy and specifically with theorizing “…about the place of literature in the struggle against environmental destruction.” (Laurence, Writings for an Endangered World 302). Ecocritics seek to make their work relevant to efforts directed at understanding environmental degradation and finding less destructive ways of living
with and within nature than those offered by the dominant modern ways of the world. As Lawrence Buell claims, “The success of all environmentalist efforts finally hinges not on ‘some highly developed technology, or some arcane new science’ but on ‘a state of mind’: on attitudes, feelings, images, narratives,” all of which can be found in “acts of environmental imagination.” (Laurence 1-2).

Ecocriticism has come to mean not only the application of ecology and ecological principles to the study of literature, but also the theoretical approach to the interrelational web of natural cultural and supernatural phenomena. It began to explore constructions of environment in literary texts and theoretical discourse. Even the aesthetic categories by which our feelings for nature are understood as the beautiful, the picturesque, the scenic, the sublime, the wild etc. have been defined largely by their use in literary and critical contexts. Most ecological work shares a common motivation, that is, the awareness that we have reached the age of environmental limits, a time when the consequences of human actions are damaging the planet’s basic life support system. This awareness brings in us a desire to contribute to environmental restoration, not only as a hobby but as a representative of literature. Ecocritics encourage others to think seriously about the aesthetic and ethical dilemmas posed by the environmental crisis and about how language and literature transmit values with profound ecological implications.

Literature environment studies have always sought at least in principle to encompass not only such specific genres as nature writing and nature poetry, but also all expressive media, including visual, musical, and cinematic as well as more purely instrumental forms of expression such as scholarly articles and the conventions of legislative documents, reports from nongovernmental organizations, and the like. Across
these various subfields of research, ecocriticism has sought to investigate how particular templates of storytelling and image-making shape humans’ real-life interactions with the natural world in ways that are historically and culturally distinctive.

Environmentalism had defined itself from the beginning as a global as well as local mode of thought through its appeal to the “Blue Planet” image of Earth from outer space and its slogan “Think globally, act locally.” Increased interest on the part of literary scholars in globalization processes and the forms of identity they help to generate—variously approached through such labels as transnationalism, cosmopolitanism, borderlands cultures, diaspora, hybridity, mestizaje (mixtures of indigenous and European ethnicities and cultures in Latin America), and nomadism—began to exert pressure on a perspective mostly focused on the local and the regional. Finally, public discussion of global environmental problems such as biodiversity loss and climate change made obvious the need for ecocritical discourse to develop new ways of addressing global interconnectedness and less obvious the idea that local place or region was the only or best way to do this.(Simon 220-38).

Ecocriticism’s relationship to the natural sciences has always been extraordinarily ambivalent. Ecocritics, like environmentalists more generally, rely on the insights of biologists, ecologists, and chemists as the basis for their claims about the state of nature, and research findings from the natural sciences provide much of the social legitimation for efforts on behalf of conservation. But some ecocritics also see science and technology as root causes of ecological crisis, both in reducing nature to a mere object to be studied and manipulated by a detached observer, and in amplifying people’s ability to inflict
damage on nature. Consequently, ecocritical analyses have argued for a range of discrepant perspectives regarding the role of the natural sciences in cultural inquiry.

For most ecocritics, ecology has played a more indirect role. Considered more synthetic than other sciences, ecology, especially in ecocriticism’s first phase of development, was often understood to provide an account of the natural functioning of ecosystems as stable, harmonious, and homeostatic if not disrupted by humans. Societies that understand and adapt themselves to this state of nature, it was thought, are or become freer, fairer, and more sustainable. Literary works that portrayed such harmonious interrelations between individuals, social communities, and their natural surroundings, such as the poetry of A.R. Ammons, Wendell Berry, Robinson Jeffers, W.S. Merwin, and Gary Snyder as well as a great deal of Native American literature were singled out for praise in that they seemed to present models of sustainable living. (Elder 246). In one of the poems A R Ammons says:

The brooks give me
Sparkles plenty, an
Abundance
But ask nothing of me…. 11

He reminds the readers of the perils hidden in nature if we move away from a harmonious living,

I can look up at the Sky and Tell
How things are likely to go for

The next hundred million years:

The Universe will not probably find life…

Many other fields of scientific inquiry, such as botany (especially in its connection with agriculture and gardening), ornithology, genetics, and conservation biology are addressed, often in minute detail, in environmentally oriented verbal and visual works. Indeed, partly because of this interest in blending scientific findings with aesthetic textures, environmentalism has found particularly rich expression in the genres of nonfiction prose and, in film, the nature documentary, genres that have not been as prominent in the other fields of cultural production that emerged from the new social movements of the 1960s and 1970s. Compared with the novels, poems, plays, and feature films that have made the feminist, gay, civil rights, and anti colonial movements such towering presences in literature and the arts, the hallmark of environmentalism has been a kind of prose and film that sits at the intersection of narrative and science, blending the endeavor to convey a scientific perspective on environmental crisis with the impulse to tell large- and small-scale stories about humans’ interaction with nature.

Annie Dillard’s Pulitzer-Prize winning *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* (1974), for example, blends detailed observations of the natural world with the author’s reflections on the human meanings of life and death, whereas IshimureMichiko’s *Kugai jodo* (*Paradise in the Sea of Sorrow*, 1969) combines personal narrative with legal and medical documents in the attempt to portray the suffering of victims of *Minamata*

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German novelist Christa Wolf, writing in what was then East Germany, blends science and storytelling even more seamlessly in *Störfall: Nachrichten eines Tages* (*Accident: A Day’s News*, 1987), a novel that contrasts the description of the protagonist’s brother’s brain surgery with the emerging news about the nuclear reactor explosion at Chernobyl. This double plot allows Wolf to juxtapose different perceptions of advanced technology, different experiences of risk, and different perspectives on the role of science in mediating contemporary humans’ relationship to their own bodies and a world invisibly but irremediably contaminated. Wolf’s literary engagement with science and the environment was taken so seriously that it led to public, controversial, and politically charged discussions about the novel among scientists, intellectuals, and artists in print and at the East German Academy of Arts between 1988 and 1990. (Buell 423).

Thus ecocriticism places the ‘environment’ on the table as a pressing priority and generates a number of specific critical approaches that offer the promise of a deeper, more nuanced grasp of environmental issues both within and beyond the environmental humanities.

There are many theories supporting environmental activism. Theoretical approach provides reason and logical base for activism and movements. These theories suggest that support for environmental movements can be explained by a social, psychological theory that is congruent with existing social movements.

Moral and Norm Activism theory which was proposed by S H Schwartz in 1972 holds that pre-environmental actions occur in response to personal moral norms about such actions and that these are activities in individuals who believe that environmental

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13 An epidemic of mercury poisoning caused by toxic waste disposal in Japan between the 1950s and the 1970s.
conditions pose threat to other people, other species or biosphere and that the actions they initiate could avert those consequences (349-364). In this approach there are three ‘value orientations’ or types of values relevant to environmentalism: self interest, altruism towards other species and biosphere.

Another theory New Ecological Paradigm, proposed by Dunlap and his colleagues stated that the rise of the environmental movement is linked to growing acceptance of a new ecological paradigm or world view- a view that human actions have substantial adverse effects on a fragile biosphere (10-19). The new Ecological paradigm scale developed by this group is perhaps the most widely used social psychological measure in the literature of environmentalism. The new ecological scale primarily measures broad beliefs about the biosphere and the effects of human action on it- a set of folk ecological theory from which beliefs about the adverse consequences of ecological changes can easily be deducted.

Douglas and Wildacsky proposed Cultural Theory in 1982, which points that the basis of contemporary environmentalism lie in deep rooted orienting dispositions or cultural biases that make some individuals especially fearful of environmental threats to human health and safety (49). They have developed scales that measures four orienting dispositions: egalitarianism, hierarchy, individualism and fatalism. The theory suggests that egalitarians will be most concerned with the environment and individualists least concerned.

Inglehart is the proponent of Post Materialist Values Theory in 1977. This theory holds that a new set of ‘post materialist’ social and political values and attitudes is emerging in the industrial world as a result of increasing affluence and security. These
values emphasis quality of life and self expression as important desiderata in a society in contrast to materialist values that have emphasized economic well being and personal and national security. Inglehart sees emerging environmental concern as one result of increasing post materialism. (115-119)

Theory of the Sacredness of Nature holds that Nature is sacred because it is created by God, nature is spiritual and sacred by itself. Studies by Paul C Stern makes a point clear that people who hold nature sacred, whether, because it was created by God or it is sacred in itself, are more active in supporting environmental protection (86-87). Religious or spiritual beliefs may be especially important because they offer an absolute standard that supersedes appeals to efficiency, practicality and expedience.

Environmental action and issues often involve collective or community goods such as air and water. Therefore individuals may feel a moral obligation to take into consideration both other humans and the non-human world in evaluating environmental behaviours. The Personal Value theory was advocated by Schults P W and Zelency in 1999. According to them, it is the activation of a person’s moral norm. This takes place when individual has an awareness of environmental problems (and their adverse consequences) and believes that environmental conditions are creating a threat to the individual values: threat to self, other human and biosphere. (255-65).

Despite this variety, all environmental movement discourses have common elements in their beliefs and values; human action has the potential for adversely affecting the biophysical environment, changes in the biophysical environment can harm things people care about, and steps should be taken to avoid at least harmful actions.
The theories and the organizations that promote them differ in how they define ‘harm’ in their understanding of why human’s act to harm the environment and in the remedies they propose for the problem. But it is still meaningful to speak of them as part of a single movement. The writers have an important role to play in understanding the ‘harm’ and suggesting remedies for it.

Eco-social activism represents the dynamic reaction and interactions of the public against the powerful vested interests which endanger the ecology and environment. Social transformation for environment and social justice is the heart of the effort. The writer activists play a major role in formulating public opinion and motivate them to participate in the ecological movements. Social activists are the mediators between those who govern and those who are governed. In other words, social activists act as intermediaries between the ideal society and the actual organizing of social, religious, political and economic life of the members of the community, society and Nation. Activism is an important element in the process of social transformation and a key feature of civic involvement- social participation in civil society.

Activism is associated with an ideal or a cause that translates beyond mere offering of one’s service, as in volunteerism. It can be a particularistic form of advocacy. Perhaps the best way of understanding advocacy is the act of translating private problems into social issues. on this, social critic, Henry Girouse, explains: ‘Translating the private into public, then is about more than enlarging the realm of critique and affirming, the existence of common good; it is also about the struggle over democratic public life and the importance of re-thinking…”(5)
The essential components of social activism are ‘a sense of historical mission’ and ‘genuine concern for the people.’ The sense of historical mission is necessary to situate oneself. Without it one will not be conscious of his or her crucial role in the process of social transformation. By ‘historical mission’ we mean the awareness that our present condition is shaped by historical factors and our present actions will determine the course of history in the future. Through a sense of historical mission, we will see the urgency of drawing lesson from the past that has contributed to our present condition, be conscious of present doing as it will have an impact in future destiny of our society and the need to envision the kind of society we want for the future.

The other important constituent of activism is genuine concern for the people, i.e., he/she must possess a deep rooted sense of empathy. She/he must be involved in the society to partake in the joy and suffering of ordinary lives; to listen, to respect and to be involved in the historical process. An activist should understand the complexities of human interactions and mechanics of society and process of social change.

The ecosocial activists call people's attention to environmental issues, and try to promote ‘public good,’ which is the improvement of the natural environment. ‘Public good’ are those that are non-excludable and non-rival. No one can stop anyone from benefiting from a public good such as cleaner air or uncontaminated water. They play an important role to educate the masses on environmental issues through their writings, environmental rallies, plantation campaigns, street plays, real eco-disaster stories and success stories of conservation efforts. They help social groups and individuals acquire awareness and sensitivity to the total environmental and its allied problems and acquire a set of values and feelings of concern for the environment and motivation for active
participation in environmental improvement and protection. The Narmada Bachao Andolan, Navadanya and Green Belt Movement are few examples. (Shashi Web).

Activism postulates the existence, in an individual, of a high level of awareness of, and a burning desire to fight for, an issue or an instance of perceived injustice. In the literary world, if an author consistently engages with contemporary issues and advocates a certain point of view, then, for instance, like Arundhati Roy in India and Tim Winton in Australia, the literary figure is called a writer activist, generally. (Shashi Web). However, it is not that such an author usually is, or is expected to be, formally, an expert in a given field of social, economic, political, cultural or environmental studies in the contemporary period. Rather, it is the high visibility and public standing that enables an established literary figure to articulate the ideas inherent in a cause of activism, in a memorable way.

The writer matters as part of a group and in the group the writer plays a very important role, because the writer can spearhead a movement. By articulating ideas with great clarity, she/he makes it possible for others to identify with what she/he is saying. And often, the writer, by first articulating an idea, builds a platform on which others can stand. The writing may give expression to a very personal emotion, but when readers identify with it, it becomes universal and symbolises human emotion itself. It is through giving expression to human feelings that the writer becomes part of a movement for social change. However, there is this too: unless the time is ripe, unless people are ready to hear what is being said, the words make no impact at all.

The writer out of one's keen awareness of certain wrongs in the surroundings intervenes actively to bring about a change in the wide arena of public or national life, the
writing inevitably begins to look like literary activism. Rooney points out, that "literary works are themselves, of course, just one of the many components of the nation's 'public life'" (Rooney xxii). Yet, it is in the nature of literary works that the impact of their message or subject often has far-reaching consequences for the author, and more significantly, for the gigantic audience or the 'public' that, unlike the author, lives, out of the glare of 'public life'.

While speaking about the role of writer activist Shashi Deshpande made the following observation ‘If writing is a discovery as most writers affirm, full of surprises for the author herself, how can a purposeful role, of intervention, be a part of the writing? A creative writer explores gaps, silences, ambiguities and complexities and writing itself becomes a kind of activism, however, writers can have an influence on the social and political life of the nation because they are, undoubtedly, thinkers and opinion-makers.’(Shashi Web).

But there is a role which writers can and do play: this is to give voice to the voiceless, to speak on behalf of people who cannot articulate their ideas or feelings. A book may not change a person's life but sometimes a book, through a kind of identification, can spark off an understanding of herself in the reader which becomes part of the process of healing, of moving on. If writing is a quest, the reader is part of the quest, a partner who travels with the writer who can sphere head a Movement. As Kafka puts it, "A book ought to be an axe to break the frozen sea within us". (Bernadette 67).

**The language of Ecosocial activism:**

*The God of Small Things* is an ambitious novel written by Arundhati Roy with ecological reflections. This novel makes a point to address various universal themes that
range from biology to ecosocial justice. The novel is extraordinary in its ability to simultaneously address and comment on so many universally abstract themes as well as an array of ideas that regard the personal family history of each member of the Kochamma family along with even more broad concerns about the region and environment of Kerala.

The necessity to articulate and work consciously towards a better environment had been incorporated into the critique of environmental politics in her novel, no doubt. However, a novel that does not openly declare itself as propagandist and polemical has limited scope to communicate and publicize any particular kind of activism, environmental or otherwise. *The God of Small Things*, had subtly and consistently introduced images that suggested a particular orientation in environmental politics, but it has been easier for her and the effect has been more conspicuous when she wrote about the maladjusted nature of development activities in the environmental context in the frankly avowed activist essays that came in the decade following the publication of the novel.

The narrative of this story comes from the perspective of Rahel, both as a little girl at the age of seven and a woman at the age of thirty-one. The point of view of a seven year old gives this story a unique touch. The imagery within this novel is rather excessive and can be seen within the first few lines of the novel as well as all the way throughout the novel. The author paints a picture of the surroundings from the very beginning by describing the month of May within the town of Ayemenem. May is described as being a "hot, brooding month", days are described as being "long and humid" while the "river shrinks and black crows gorge on bright mangoes in still, dustgreen trees" (3). Even the
metaphors used are incredibly imaginative. For example, rain is described as "slanting silver ropes" that "slammed into loose earth, plowing it up like gunfire" (4). However, the most important and impressive factor of this novel is most definitely its broad ranging themes.

The subject of Roy's concern (environmental politics and human life) has remained fairly constant over the decades. A special combination of this concern and her method of literary representation has distinguished Roy as a very powerful writer-activist. Roy's skills as a fictional author have enabled her to produce a reflexive, personalized style of journalistic writing which invites the reader to share in her process of discovery: an approach that encourages support for activism. According to Roy, the activist label derives from the fact that she takes sides in her essays: "I have a point of view. What's worse, I make it clear that I think it's right and moral to take that position and what's even worse, use everything in my power to flagrantly solicit support for that position"… whilst acknowledging that this approach "skates uncomfortably close to the territory occupied by political party ideologues", she differentiates her approach thus: "…when I tell a story, I tell it not as an ideologue who wants to pit one absolute ideology against another, but as a story teller who wants to share her way of seeing." (Jane Web)

The abundance of imagery and metaphor included in this novel truly helps the reader to fully understand the severity of some of the issues involved. It is through the author's detailed and powerful words that we begin to comprehend the excessive amount of lies, secrets, scandals, violence and sex that this family takes part in with each other. It is at the end of the novel when the author takes a bold literary move by pronouncing one simple word, "Tomorrow" (321). It is at this time she provides the reader as well as the
characters with hope for the future. It is truly the perfect ending to a powerfully ambitious and mysterious story.

In “The End of the Imagination” Arundhati Roy frames her protest against globalization as a defense of aesthetics. She contrasts global development and nuclear proliferation with an alternative—beauty. “There is beauty yet in this brutal, damaged world of ours,” she writes. “Hidden, fierce, immense. Beauty that is uniquely ours and beauty that we have received with race from others, enhanced, reinvented, and made our own. We have to seek it out, nurture it, love it” (The Cost of Living 123).

*The God of Small Things* is not autobiography—it seems impossible to imagine a future for Rahel—but the work has a nonliteral autobiographical element that comes into the foreground of Roy’s subsequent political and ecosocial activism. The small living things that draw consistent attention in *The God of Small Things* recur in Roy’s political work, suggesting that the phenomenology developed in the novel should be understood as signifying her characters’ incapacity for political action, but also as a fundamental source of imaginative value Roy shares with her characters and narrator, and which she brings to political projects that maintain explicitly literary qualities. If her protest writing insists that human lives are no more important than and dependent on other kinds of lives, her continued aesthetic emphasis attempts to make this recognition possible. “The End of the Imagination,” Roy’s first foray into political engagement, is dedicated to “Marmots and voles and everything else on earth that is threatened and terrorized by the human race” (The Cost of Living 92).

Following much the same logic as the phenomenological tutorial in *The God of Small Things*, marmots reappear in her polemic against the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan,
“War Is Peace.” Roy follows a discussion of collective resistance with unrestrained animal imagery: “[H]ave we forfeited our right to dream? Will we ever be able to re-imagine beauty? Will it be possible ever again to watch the slow, amazed blink of a newborn gecko in the sun, or whisper back to the marmot who has just whispered in your ear—without thinking of the World Trade Center . . .?”(The Cost of Living 192).

Roy portrays herself as a literary person, caught up in an instinctive and physical rather than rational sacrifice to boring but ethically all-too urgent debates. In “Come September” she writes, “fiction dances out of me. Nonfiction is wrenched out by the aching, broken world I wake up to every morning” (War Talk 45). Pointedly literary is the way Roy stages her political outrage autobiographically, coupling dissent to the personal act of turning away from art, and nostalgically imagining what it would be like to return after this long, painful separation. Most dramatically in “The Greater Common Good,” Roy stages a breakout from the mould of an empirically-minded protester. Telling the story of the villagers whose precarious but viable existence on the riverbanks of the Narmada Valley was destroyed by construction of the Sardar Sarovar Dam, she explains, “suddenly they can’t trust their river any more. It’s like a loved one who has developed symptoms of psychosis. Anyone who has loved a river can tell you that the loss of a river is a terrible, aching thing. But I’ll be rapped on the knuckles if I continue in this vein. When we’re discussing the Greater Common Good there’s no place for sentiment. One must stick to facts. Forgive me for letting my heart wander.” (The Cost of Living 50).

Shiva has encapsulated her entire works into ‘seed’. She unfolds the entire history through seeds. For her “….seed in its essence is all of the past evolution of the
Earth, the evolution of human history, and the potential for future evolution. The seed is the embodiment of culture because culture shaped the seed with careful selection—women picked the best, diversified. So from one grass you get two lakh grains of rice. That is a convergence of human intelligence and nature’s intelligence. It is the ultimate expression of life, and in our language, it means “…that from which life arises on its own, forever and ever and ever.” (Shiva Web). Her writings are in laymen’s language with thematic expressions and metaphors. On speaking about her style of writing she says, “…Expression of oneself in metaphorical language at times can be the most effective use of imagery to make a point…” (Shiva Web).

Vandana Shiva uses the language skillfully to argue that through the masculinisation of agriculture globalization has an adverse effect on gender justice, turning nature and women into passive fields for sowing and permitting corporations to plunder local resources, removing capital from local hands while importing western concepts of individualism, ownership and the market place into cultures that thrived on community, cooperation and respect for the nature.

She uses her analytical ability to uncover the semantic engineering that goes on when global corporations colonize and destroy traditional agriculture in the Third World. Shiva’s works uncovers the metaphors and the models underlying the so-called modernization of agriculture, attack on the nature and women. Shiva’s approach can be read on two levels. First we have the factual, objective analysis of how rural traditions in India are being dismantled and the call to resist physically and politically. Then, on the meta-analytical level, Shiva critically delineates how the myths associated with neoliberal projects and ‘solutions’ are being formulated. From a critical discourse analytical
standpoint it is significant to note that Shiva is a discerning observer of how language is employed in this process. As Shiva says: “The global free trade economy has become a threat to sustainability and the very survival of the poor and other species is at stake not just as a side effect or as an exception but in a systemic way through a restructuring of our worldview at the most fundamental level. Sustainability, sharing and survival is being economically outlawed in the name of market competitiveness and market efficiency.” (Shiva Web).

Vandana Shiva is one of the world's most prominent radical writer “… in Staying Alive she defines the links between ecological crises, colonialism, and the oppression of women. It is a scholarly and polemical plea for the rediscovery of the ‘feminine principle’ in human interaction with the natural world, not as a gender-based quality, rather an organizing principle, a way of seeing the world.” (The Guardian Web).

In Staying Alive, Vandana Shiva looks at the history of development and progress, stripping away the neutral language of science to reveal third-world development policy as the global twin of the industrial revolution. As Shiva makes clear, the way this development paradigm is being implemented—through violence against nature and women—threatens survival itself. She focuses on how rural Indian women experience and perceive the causes and effects of ecological destruction, and how they conceive and initiate processes to stop the destruction and begin regeneration. As the world continues to follow destructive paths of development, Shiva’s Staying Alive is a fiercely relevant book that positions women not solely as survivors of the crisis, but as the source of crucial insights and visions to guide our struggle.
Wangari Maathai has structured *Unbowed*, a Memoir, her rhetorical and linguistic means of argumentation, and she turns her whole body of writing into a single - but very convincing - argument for a responsible and holistic approach to empowerment of women and nation building in Kenya by planting trees.

In a critical analysis of *Unbowed*, her autobiography, one can easily find those instances where Wangari Maathai – in either subtle or obvious ways – addresses the development of the post-colonial Kenyan society, her cultural heritage, the effects of colonialism, and the environmental issues that lie at the heart of her organization, the Green Belt Movement. She manages to build a convincing argument through a strategy of very diplomatic and nuanced perspectives on Kenyan development legitimating subsequent criticism. It also clarifies that the main problem in Kenya is the disempowerment, alienation and division of the Kenyan people and that her visions for a democratic Kenya are based on women empowerment and promotion of eco-social justice through eco-social activism.

In writing *Unbowed*, Wangari Maathai mixes the genre of memoir with the very similar genre of the autobiography, which supports a duality of the book, allowing Maathai to speak both her own case - gaining recognition for her achievements and her identity - and to speak on a collective level – for the recognition of Kenya – allowing her space to discuss possible changes for the better of the country. The autobiographical structure she has used has a purpose, as it is part of creating her identity because by putting together stories about her life she creates a representation of herself. Her identity is created by the stories she tells, developing an understanding of her that constructs a full person. She is molding her identity through different stories represented in the
autobiography. She has thus, through the autobiographical use of a chronological portrayal of her life, depicted a woman who has used the experiences in her life to learn about the needs of her country. Furthermore, through her stories she has build up arguments for the importance of her life project; The Green Belt Movement. The representation of her identity is a key characteristic in an autobiography, which entails the examination of the subject’s interiority and finding coherence in the past. Maathai, as does the autobiographer, relates her life story to crucial historical events and offers personal evaluations of actions in which she speculates on the significance of her partaking.

Maathai in her autobiography *Unbowed- a Memoir* uses a number of metaphors and narrations of her childhood memories to appeal to the world's conscience on the essence of environmental conservation and eco-justice."… As I conclude I reflect on my childhood experience when I would visit a stream next to our home to fetch water for my mother. I would drink water straight from the stream. Playing among the arrowroot leaves I tried in vain to pick up the strands of frogs eggs, believing they were beads. But every time I put my little fingers under them they would break. Later, I saw thousands of tadpoles: black, energetic and wriggling through the clear water against the background of the brown earth. This is the world I inherited from my parents. Today, over 50 years later, the stream has dried up, women walk long distances for water, which is not always clean, and children will never know what they have lost. The challenge is to restore the home of the tadpoles and give back to our children a world of beauty and wonder." (134). She went on: "Today we are faced with a challenge that calls for a shift in our thinking,
so that humanity stops threatening its life-support system. We are called to assist the Earth to heal her wounds and in the process heal our own." (135).

Maathai’s writings and life revolves around the very idea ‘Tree’. The Green Belt Movement as envisaged by Maathai is not only an environmental organization but a strategic means of unification across ethnic and cultural barriers, and her frequent mentions of Tree in Unbowed suggest that it is not only a big part of her environmental career but also a very big part of her life-philosophy. In bringing together people from different communities and teaching them how to work together and overcome their differences, Maathai creates a space for a renewed sense of understanding and respect and makes possible the renegotiation of cultural signification. Put differently, Maathai through her work with the Green Belt Movement – makes it possible for different communities to reestablish social ties and achieve a sense of commonality and nationness.

Tree planting was simple because it was designed to be something women could do with their two hands close to home, including harvesting native seeds in their area. At the same time tree planting was complex because it became a way of linking human rights, poverty, environmental protection, justice and peace.

The Green Belt Movement’s focus on empowering the Kenyan people and overcoming cultural barriers is portrayed by Maathai as one of its main forces and priorities besides addressing environmental issues. Out of her experiences with planting trees she comes to realize that the Green Belt Movement work entails some very attractive side-effects. First of all, due to its closeness to the Kenyan people, it provides an indication of the sources and causalities of disempowerment. Secondly, it creates a
common purpose and provides a focus for cross-cultural collaboration and thirdly, it represents a holistic basis for further development of ideas. (Unbowed 250). In this regard, Maathai notes that: “… Gradually the Green Belt Movement grew from a tree-planting programme into one that planted ideas as well. We held seminars with the communities in which Green Belt worked, in which I encouraged women and men to identify their problems …” It was wonderful to see ordinary women and men speaking confidently in the meetings, in their own languages, and so honestly and openly. (Unbowed 174).

On the personal level, the function of Maathai’s book thus seems to be to portray her life to give meaning to it and to explain her life to others to go against the misrecognition she often has been “given” by for example the Kenyan Government and the press. She explains who she is to resist any misrecognition of her identity and to escape any reduced mode of being, forced onto her by the things that have been written and said about her. (Mirian 95). Maathai gets the option through her memoir to explain that she has been fully active in the many fights for Kenyan fair democracy, and concerning her own existence and introspection, she has focused on the development of her personality, in which she has portrayed a strong woman who does not allow for others to stop her. She has gone against the discourse of the African woman, who from the Kenyans’ point of view takes fully care of the African home and who does not strive for Western qualities. She has furthermore gone against the pressure from the Government. All this depicts a woman who has scrutinized herself and taken many decisions that have created her identity.
On the other hand she has been wise to use the label “memoir” for her book, as it allows her to go on to a collective level. The characteristic of the memoir was to focus on public matters, rather than personal. The writer’s career is described rather than her private life, and the content of the memoir is of activities of historical importance. These characteristics give the reader certain expectations when reading the title *Unbowed, A memoir*. The reader will have associations to books discussing important issues in history and in a society. She thus creates a space for herself in which she can discuss the problems of her society. The problems she depicts, when describing her own life story in the spirit of the autobiography, are open for a subjective debate as this is the expectation of the memoir and of the reader of a memoir. This means that, intentionally or not, the effect of mixing the two genres is there, as the expectations of a reader affect them unconsciously. Thus in *Unbowed*, Maathai has the characteristic of the factual autobiography gaining credibility, but can now debate the problems in connection to the Kenyan society having taken the focus away from her persona through the memoir. On this non personal level Maathai is able to present a striking critique of the present day Kenya and the Kenyan government, through autobiographical accounts of her oppression, and to go even further and debate what could be done to change this. She portrays possibilities to change status quo and in this way gives hope to her people.

The layout of the memoir is one of conviction, as it slowly builds up our opinion alongside Maathai’s. She started off talking about the environment and finishes on the note of the environment too. In between she has built up her argument proving that the Green Belt Movement has many healing effects. She first and foremost convinces us of the wonders of the trees, what impact they actually have, by telling us stories of her
childhood when the trees were still there and giving positive contributions to the local communities in Kenya. The trees, she argues, provided sustainability, clean water, they hindered earth erosion and thus made it possible for families to grow crops and in this way get varied food and nourishment. Maathai then goes on to stories explaining that the wonders have disappeared alongside with the trees, which has lead to a lot of problems. She then continues with her own realization of the fact that it can all come back if they get back the trees. (Mirian 95).