CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The present thesis deals with the study of ecological perspective reflected in the select novels of J. G. Ballard. The World literature has been witnessing a new categorization viz. ‘Green Literature’ that utilizes the most of the narrative techniques of Science Fiction but differs in its literary motif. A brief review of the contemporary literary criticism reveals that the most of the critics have confused the ‘green literature’ either with the science fiction or with the speculative fiction. J. G. Ballard’s fictional enterprises and the critical corpus available on his writing can be served as a best illustration of this argument. Especially in the context of British literature, Ballard can be considered as a representative author whose works have explored the ecological crises and the societal collapse as a subsequent effect of it. The drought, wind, increased sea level, global warming and mining related ecological problems are explored in his works. Few of the critics have considered his vision of an environmentalist with all other comparatively insignificant factors like psychological landscape, speculative future or other thematic concerns of the hard science fiction. But it should be noted that the analysis of his writing with an exclusive attention to the environmental crises is necessary to define his pursuit of an environmentalist in particular and the eco-criticism in general.

Eco-criticism is also named as ‘Green (cultural) studies’, ‘eco-poetics’ and ‘environmental literary criticism’ that considers the ecological consciousness of the author and how this consciousness shapes his literary works. In the contemporary period when the world is receiving the adverse reports on the environmental degradation;
newspapers are full of news related to the global warming and disastrous human activities; the Hollywood is portraying the ‘dooms day’ due to the ecological decay, the literature of the period is also depicting the decaying environment and endangered human habitations. The new-consciousness regarding the decay of environment reflected in the contemporary literary texts cannot be analysed with the traditional notions, tools and techniques of the literary criticism which are inadequate. Therefore, a new dimension of eco-criticism is developed in order to fathoms the effects of these environmental factors on the creative faculty of the authors.

This new approach of eco-criticism has broadened its scope from nature writing, Romantic poetry and canonical literature to the whole range of film, television, theatre, painting, architectures, animal and scientific narratives and major literary text that deal with the environmental issues. Though the scope of ecocriticism has become enormously huge still there has been little dispute about the moral and philosophical aims of eco-criticism as compare to other forms of criticism.

Eco-critics while investigating a literary text deals with the ecological values reflected in it. In such kind of criticism, critics are interesting in reading the text from ecological perspective to know his envisioning of the natural decay. The characters, setting, plot, and symbolisms are considered in connection to their contribution in the making of environmental utopia or dystopia. Another area of interest of eco-critics is to study the human perception of wilderness and variation in it from time to time. It is seen that the ecocriticism is gradually broadening its scope as the eco-critics consider the history,
economics, philosophy, ethics and psychology are possible contributors to ecocriticism.

The ecological consciousness in literature can be seen as a contemporary trend and the literary theories of ecology as a most attended temptation of the intelligentsia of the period that is marked with the disturbing reports of Glaciers’ Erosions and Depositions. The idea of ‘the end of the world’ is not a new phenomenon as its references can be traced in Mesopotamian flood stories, Greek mythologies, ancient Hindu cosmology as ‘Mahapralaya’ and ‘Great Deluge’ in Biblical and Koranic references. These ancient mythological narratives are analysed in connection to its undercurrents of religious dogmas but on the common ground these mythological stories can be seen as natural cycle of rebirth. These mythological narratives have formulated a collective consciousness of humanity that stimulated a continuous probing on the possibilities of end. This hovering idea of ‘end’ further gets different modern theories that includes the nuclear anhelation, alien inventions, imbalance of natural cycles, overdose of pesticides, infectious diseases, bio-bomb, terrorism, increased population, banging of meteorite, AI takeover etc. These different possibilities further provide a wide literary space that allowed authors to imagine the situation in which the humanity witnesses its end. This kind of exploration becomes more frequent after the rise and development of Science Fiction.

The popular stereotypical presentation of the destruction of the earth soon shifted its motif from giving air to the long-lived dread of end to the more serious and realistic ecological reasoning of the end. These authors start depicting the ecological decay as the most probable reason for the end of the world. This kind of shift draws a thin and transparent line between the Hard Science Fiction and the Green Literature. The
novels that fit in the category of ‘green literature’ sustain a vision of an environmentalist who by using literature as platform to educate or warn his readers regarding ecological decay. The literature maintains a fine balance between its aesthetic pleasure and didactic values.

In the history of British literature, one can come across many of the works that have depicted the themes in connection to ecology and its decay, but its analysis in order to formulation of the ecocritical theory got a minimal attention. As a result, it can be seen that the scholars have formulated a theory by considering all the necessary factors but its testimony in connection to its proper literary examples is not adequate. Therefore, the present research work deals with J. G. Ballard’s select novels in the light of the eco-critical theory.

For the convenience of the study the thesis is divided into five chapters with a separate introduction. The introduction part of the thesis contains aims, objectives, scope, limitations and the review of relevant literature that helps the researcher to keep the thesis intact and avoid the digressions. The section also deals with the biographical details of J. G. Ballard that helps to understand the influences and significant events in his life that have shaped his literature. The section of introduction is followed by the first chapter that deals with a theoretical framework which helps to perceive the eco-consciousness depicted in his select novels. The chapter deals with the definition, nature and scope of the term ‘eco-criticism’ and its actual application to the understanding of eco-literature. These definitions and significant opinions of the theorists working in this direction help to analyse the select novels of J. G. Ballard in the subsequent chapters.
The second chapter of the thesis entitled “Environmental Crisis and Societal Collapse in The Wind From Nowhere and The Drowned World” deals with his two significant novels that reflect how the natural imbalance caused by man lead the world towards dystopia. In this dystopia the very existence of humanity is shown endangered due to hostile nature and in the wake of apocalyptic disaster the social systems that were once created to systematize the social behaviour collapsed and marks the beginning of savage world. The statement can be elucidated in the light of the behavioural changes noted in the characters of The Wind From Nowhere. In the novel when the wind is flowing at comparatively low speed, the characters try to act as per their social role and keep the social institutions intact, but as in the course of the time when it becomes obvious that the storm is not a normal phenomenon but a beginning of apocalypse, they reject to follow the codes and conducts prescribed by human civilization and act as per their natural instincts which is important to survive. Further, this argument can be illustrated with the incidence depicted in the section “Death in a Bunker” in which Kroll’s behaviour is not governed by the rules set by the civilization but the natural instincts that gives preference to the personal safety. In this novel it can be observed that the systems that are created to overcome on the hostile world is destructed and man is restricted to his biological capacity to win his survival. In the The Drowned World, this argument of environmental crises and societal collapse become more obvious as it reflects the post-apocalyptic vision of the world in which the flora and fauna is transforming to their earlier forms in order to adjust themselves to the altered environmental conditions. In this novel Ballard emphasises that man is just a higher biological unit who also tend to show the similar kind of transformation of Homo sapiens for to the process of Lamarkism. In this novel Strangman shows the similar kind of tendencies that can be
resembled with the personality of Kroll. In this novel due to the flood the well-established mega-city like London which was once a pleasure hub is transformed into a tropical jungle that have compelled the human being to survive with his ‘innate releasing mechanism’. Thus, in both of these novels Ballard is depicting that the natural destruction may restore the earth to its previous form and transform modern man to his status of Homo Sapiens to live life without any modern gadgets.

The third chapter of the thesis is entitled “Human Fixation and Fury of Nature in The Burning World and The Crystal World” deals with the similar kind of ecological consciousness reflected in his select novels. As most of the eco-literature attempts to focus on the contemporary erosion of the natural resources and the malpractices conducted by the modern man that seriously harms the environment, J. B. Ballard is not an exception as he also extends the present ecological issues caused by the human obsession to live a prosperous life without showing any concern regarding the environmental decay. In the novel The Burning World, he has dealt with the issue of industrial waste and the global warming as its serious consequences. In the novel it is clearly depicted that the industrial waste flushed into the ocean imbalances the chain of rain by creating saturated long-chain polymers which unable the evaporation. The extended drought on the earth gravely contributes in endangering the human society. Ballard has given a strong message that if the man keeps exploiting the natural resources, he will face a dangerous situation ahead. It can be seen in the novel that the drought is a result of human activities but now it is beyond his capacity to rectify the balance of the nature. The idea that is presented in the novel also suggest that what will happen if man neglects the alarming environmental situation created by global warming. In the second novel analysed in the present chapter also gives
highly classified scientific reason behind the apocalyptic crystallization of forest. Though, these novels follow the cause-effect theory with the help of ‘anti-matter’ and ‘antitime’, it is dissimilar to his previous novels as the phenomena depicted in it is not a human creation but an inevitable process of galaxies. Besides this scientific reasoning there are few opinions of the characters that clearly note the crystallization is a human phenomenon as an excessive exploitation of mining. The crystallization stands as a central metaphor for the fury of the nature that suggests man that every natural phenomenon has a pre-decided end and his activities are fastening the process.

The analysis carried out in the fourth chapter of the thesis entitled as “Aftermaths of Ecological Collapse and Pursuit of Environmentalist in Hello America and Rushing to Paradise” makes the statement that literary works of J. G. Ballard is a pursuit of an environmentalist who believes that today’s environmental crises will cause a disaster. His environmental consciousness becomes more obvious in these two novels as he has depicted that the human activities are the basic reasons behind the environmental crises. In Hello America he portrays how damming the Bering Strait reversed the normally clockwise currents in the Pacific Ocean and in Rushing to Paradise the apocalyptic imagination is based on the nuclear threat. The novels that are analysed in the previous sections are indirect in rendering of the ecological messages as they emphasise the psychological trauma of the characters created due to the environmental crises. However, Hello America and Rushing to Paradise contain the extended descriptions of the ecological decay and give a comparatively little space to the psyche of the characters. Besides these, one more identical difference can be noted here is that in his previous novels he has shown that the disaster on the larger scale has a capacity to
destroy the entire planet, but in these two novels he has identified the real landscapes which were destructed due to the human activities. In *Hello America* Rocky Mountains of US suffered with an extended drought and USR is able to grow grain on Arctic Circle due to changes in the directions of sea currents happened due the damming of Bering Strait and in *Rushing to Paradise* it is Pacific island of St. Esprit destructed due to nuclear testing. Both these reasons are the real scientific ideas or events, for instance – the damming on Bering Strait was the Soviet Union’s proposed bi-national project with United States of America to warm the Arctic Ocean. The design was prepared by Peter Borisov in 1956, but the project was not materialized in reality. The Pacific island of St. Esprit can be identified with many other islands that were once used for the nuclear testing during The World Wars.

After the analysis of the select novels of J. G. Ballard, certain common grounds become apparent that are important to understand his vision towards the ecology and theorize it in the corpus of the ecological studies in literature. Most of the contemporary writers writing under the genre of ‘Science Fiction’ or more popularly known as ‘Speculative Fiction’ are more concerned with the popular stereotypes that attract the readers by creating havoc. Basic difference between Ballard and his contemporary is that they are preoccupied with the revaluation in computer technology and bioengineering. They visualize the revolution to such an extended that the human values are replaced with the cold, emotionless mechanisms that destroys the foundations of human culture and society. In most their novels and their popular film adaptations, they show that how a project in bioengineering went wrong and caused a disaster for the entire population. But Ballard in his novels is concerned with the ecological problems that are created out of the modern life style.
His literary works, therefore, reflect the natural destruction happening due to imbalance of the natural cycles. In this sense Ballard stands different in this tradition and his works which are generally categorized as a Science Fiction, should be considered as the ‘green-literature’.

His literary renderings of the ecological issues are not meant to create havoc that is frequently found in the popular science fiction created with some specific literary serotypes but are very systematically organized with the principles of cause-effect theory. The analysis of his novels, thus, is useful to understand his eco-consciousness in particular and to foreground the theoretical perspectives of ecological studies in literature in general.

J. G. Ballard’s fictional world transcends the futuristic landscapes in which a disastrous wind is about to destroy the human civilization; or a dreadful flood is endangered humanity; or global warming has increased heat to an unbearable extend, anti-matter or anti-time is crystalizing the animate and inanimate world; diverting the sea currents creates deserts; and nuclear radiation lead the mankind on the brink of extinction. The portrayals of these landscapes are not normal in terms of the ‘landscape theory of literature’ as the narrator has created a parallel universe in the distinct future. This scheme of depiction of the futuristic world has a specific motif as it allows author to mirror the contemporary ecological problems with realistic exaggeration. Though Ballard has used the futuristic time, his landscapes, on the contrary, can be located with the realistic latitude and altitude. His novels begin at a specific geographical location, they soon show that the natural forces have destroyed the political boundaries and the national identities and make his characters a representative sufferer who suffers for his own deeds. This eradication of national, religious, economic and political identity makes them a higher
biological unit who has to share a common predicament with other animals. His portrayals of landscapes depict that the man is also deprived from the lifesaving gadgets.

In the wake of end and as all other motifs of modern life is substituted with a mere survival game, the modern man has to look back to his natural instincts that help to take the right decisions. It is also noted that in the critical moments of the natural disaster man also forgets the morality, ethics and emotional commitments that was once bonding on him in the name of culture and civilization. For instance, the characters of The Wind From Nowhere, tries to save their lives without thinking about others and for that they are also ready to follow the jungle law which suggests them that fittest is survival. In The Drawn World the protagonist Kerans notices alteration in physical world along with psychological changes. The animals and vegetations are showing the physical characteristics of their giant predecessors, anthropologically noted as Triassic. Besides these physical changes the author has minutely noted the psychological changes in the characters like Marshall, Kroll, Strangman, etc, who respond with their innate surviving mechanism that allowed them to break the rules of civilization. Thus, this psychological change can be interpreted as naturalization of mankind and designating him just a biological unit that is left on the mercy of the nature.

J. G. Ballard, besides using the popular stereotypes of dystopian fiction, has created a corpus of imagery in order to create these landscapes of ecological destruction. He drags and exaggerates the contemporary ecological problems to show how it would cause the destruction in future. His imagery is pictorial in nature as it helps reader to visualize the situation and understand the seriousness of ecological decay. The motif behind this pictorial symbolism is to let the readers
know that what will exactly happen with the Nature if man continued the ecological destruction for his modern lifestyle. His pictorial imagery intensifies the effect of the ecologically destructed landscapes that also suits to his literary motif of warning of the future disasters to man. For instance – in Ballard’s novel the wind’s intensity is so powerful that it converted sea and the lakes into plains by holding the water as a vapor or digs the six feet of topsoil; the sun is so hot that it has created the cracked surfaces; the water level is so high that it has transformed cities into lagoons; anti-mater and anti-time are so powerful that it has created a crystallization process; the radiation is so high that it has endangered few of the species. Ballard has created new pre-apocalyptic or post-apocalyptic world with the minute details along with the pictorial imagination.

The select novels of J. G. Ballard, in common, have highlighted the most debated issue of the nature-culture dualism. In recent period, the discussion of natural-cultural clash is contributed with the new dimension of the ecological thought. This debate has been underscoring that the human civilization is exploiting the natural resources. This exploitation has endangered many of the species on the earth but as the reports of the global warming starts dominating every thought of contemporary world and the harsh changes in the nature endangered the mankind, the novelists, despite of their different national origins starts writing with a specific consciousness regarding the nature that afterwards named as ‘eco-consciousness’. It can be observed that Ballard in the all these novels show that the modern man and his civilization is emerging as a homicide as he is destroying his natural inhabitation. In *The Wind From Nowhere*, Ballard is keen in picturizing the vast landscapes of natural calamity which resembles with dooms day referred in the religious
dogmas. Similarly, in *The Drowned World* global warming is transforming London into a tropical garden; in *The Burning World* the drought has transformed the modern cities into a desert, in *The Crystal World* the process of crystallization is crystallizing everything that come into it contact, in *Hello America* imbalance of natural cycle has destroyed North America; in *Rushing to Paradise* the nuclear testing has endangered the species. In all these examples it can be seen that the nature is reciprocally creating the destruction of human civilization as humans destroying nature. The novels also depict the symbols that represent these two parties, for instance – in *The Wind From Nowhere* the Hardoon Tower stands for man and the destructive wind represents the Nature; Dr. Kerans stands as an agent of life in future, however the burning sun stands as a natural force in *The Drowned World*; in *The Burning World* eventual rain stands for the life, however the drought stands as a destructive force of nature; in *The Crystal World* the deceases and the process of crystallization stand for the nature and the mining stands for man’s destructive activity; in *Hello America* the damming the sea current represent the man’s destructive intrusion however, the drought represent the nature; in *The Rushing to Paradise* the nuclear testing is a human activity whereas its radiation and destruction is nature. Thus, in every novel a binary opposition is formulated in order to suggest that the natural balance is important for the very existence of mankind on the earth.

There is one more common ground, which holds all these novels together under the category of green literature, is a journey serotype. In all the select novels it can be observed that the characters are moving from one place to another in search of security of life and other lifesaving amenities. In the animal kingdom, the animals move from one territory to
another in search of food, shelter and security. The paleo-anthropological theory has also admitted the single origin of Homo sapiens and the migration has created the modern world. In *The Wind From Nowhere* the characters are moving towards the Hardoon Tower that is created for the safety from the disastrous wind; in *The Drowned World* the characters are moving to the north in order to survive from searing sun; in *The Burning World* the characters are heading towards the coastal areas in search of water; in *The Crystal World* the characters who were affected by leprosy are moving deep in the forest, however the military is evacuating the place for safety from the crystallization; in *Hello America* the characters have undertaken expedition to North-America; in *Rushing to Paradise* the characters are moving to the Pacific Island St. Espirit. The motif behind their journey is either move from the dangerous area to safe zone or to curiously move back to the destructed landscape. But the journey is inevitable as the safe habitants are destructed due to the decay of nature. Thus, the message that Ballard wants to translate is very clear and loud that if man continued his destructive activities, nature will destroy him through the disastrous wind, flooded water, searing sun and drought.

After the analysis of the select novel, one can make a comprehensive statement on Ballard’s environmentalists’ vision that is explored through his thematic concerns. He believes that the apocalypse is inevitable and man is exceeding its speed to such an extent that it will take place in the near future. Ballard’s vision of apocalypse is different from the vision of destruction generally portrayed in the science fiction. He is keen in depicting the processes and the causes of natural decay that can be identified with the present period. In the select novels of J. G. Ballard, he has created a replica of the present world by highlighting certain disturbing features related to the environment. His prime focus is
on the human activities that are causing the imbalance in nature. Therefore, his world is not unfamiliar to the readers or a mere creation of a fantasy. His parallel universe is deeply rooted in the period that we can identify as a contemporary period. His slightly different dimensions to look at the present world make his literary works exceptionally different. Readers are not expected to read something radical or beyond his imagination but is expected to look to his own world with a spectacle of an environmentalist.

For Ballard, the ecological destruction can occur through the fundamental elements of nature like water, air and light. Ballard’s depiction of the end is not concerned with any religious dogma and even rejects to reveal any cultural or national under currents but on the contrary his fictional world seems to be secular as his characters are treated as a man devoid of any nation or social identity. The Darwin’s definition of man contains an adjective ‘higher’ to differentiate him from other biological units, but in Ballard’s fiction this adjective of superiority is no longer remains intact as man is seen most helpless animal in the wake of disaster. Most of the select novels of Ballard, commonly, depict that the ‘safe zones’ are destroyed and man is thrown in the midst of the wild nature. He has withdrawn all the security measures from his character which was once confirmed on them in the name of civilization and culture as a result they have forgotten their natural instincts that are required to survive in the altered hostile universe. Ballard’s few characters eventually accept the superiority of nature and instead of fighting back they prefer to surrender.

Besides this distinctiveness, one more characteristic of his writing should be noted that his depiction of altered environment accompanied with the altered human psyche. This characteristic makes his fiction,
though it is speculative, more real and appealing to the readers. His uniqueness lies in the delineation of his characters as he has imagined how will man behave in the absence of given social and cultural code. This imagination produces a behavioural pattern which resembled with the man which was in the remote anthropological stage though the period depicted is in the future. In one of the novels he has depicted the city is converted into a tropical jungle or the different species are shown the reverse symptoms of evolution. It should be noted that Ballard is speculative vision cannot be excluded from his pursuit of an environmentalist.

In the conclusion, the statement can be made that the Ballard’s literary imagination uses the ecological problems as a vehicle to reach at his parallel universe which appears as coherent and correlated picture. While reading his novels, one never comes across the feeling that a specific situation is odd to the entire scheme of imagination. Ballard’s preoccupation with ecology is not something different that he wants to reinforce on the readers but on the contrary it gets the aesthetic representation in the shape of a literary work. On most of the occasions Ballard illustrates the landscapes of destruction and the scientific reasons behind them but as a reader one never feels that it is a digression from the story as it appears as an integral part of his narration.

The altered physical conditions and damaged psyche of the characters are also contributed in the collapse of socio-cultural institution. In Ballard’s world the flights were cancelled; the sky liners were flown away; the city is converted into a jungle; scarcity of water has destroyed the safe zones; looting of treasures; and murders of innocents occurred as the subsequent part of the natural disasters. In these novels, the civilization is on the verge of destruction as nobody cares for the
morality, social codes and emotional bonding excluding few of the exceptions.

This natural, psychological and cultural collapse is portrayed to justify his pursuit of an environmentalist. Therefore, it can be argued that Ballard has given the rational justification to his portrayals of the destructions. His novels follow the cause and effect theory that make him knit the complex web of plot and subplots. In these stories, Ballard has tried to capture a vast canvas of the destructed landscapes that comprises London as well as a remote corner of a Jungle in a South-Africa. The cause-effect coherence allows him to shift his narrative focus from one destructed landscape to another without repeating the core cause behind them.

Ballard’s delineation of the characters also suits to his vision of environmentalist as they appear as an agent of humanity. These select novels delineate environmentalist, doctors, scientists, army personals as their characters. Through such kind of characterization, Ballard inserts certain real scientific facts that provide a solid platform to his speculative narratives. In all the select novels, it is common that Ballard is not allotting a larger literary space to introduce his characters or their personal lives but it is seen that his characters are caught in action since beginning to the end. As a result, his novels are full of action and the narration appears speedy and entertaining.

Except The Crystal World, all other select novels follow the archetype of ‘rebirth’ or ‘revival’. Similar to the ancient mythological stories of destruction, Ballard’s novels also show the hopeful endings. For instance- the destructive wind force finally becomes neutral in The Wind From Nowhere; eventual rain quench the thirst of the earth in The
Burning World; at the end of the novel The Drowning World the protagonist Dr Robert appears as Adam or an agent of new life; the nuclear power is used for the constructive reasons in the end of Hello America; and the characters escape from the island in Rushing to Paradise. The hopeful endings of the novels give a second chance to humanity to live and let live. The nature is restored to its amiable version and a hope for new world is cultivated at the end.

Thus, the argument made in the hypothesis of the thesis that J. G. Ballard has shown the ecological consciousness in his novels proved true. The analysis undertaken in the present thesis significantly adds multiple dimensions to the existing corpus of the ecological study in connection to the literature. The theoretical chapter and a brief review of the definitions and opinions make it obvious that the set principals of ecocriticism show the scope of illustration and significant additions. The literary representation of the ecological issues has emerged as a recent trend in literature. The authors from different nations are contributing to the eco-literature, but compare to the quantum of literary representation, very few researchers consider the eco-criticism for their analysis. As a result of it, the green literature is always found enlisted under the categories like ‘Apocalyptic Fiction’ ‘Dystopian or Utopian Novels’, ‘Science Fiction’, ‘Fantasy Literature’, ‘Alien Invention Novels’, etc. In the climate change fiction speculation, scientific theorization and modern machineries occupy the larger literary space that lures the researchers to ignore the eco-consciousness of the author. J. G. Ballard is a significant representative of such authors whose prime focus is to depict the ecological crises and therefore the analysis of his novels has a pedagogical significance and theoretical implications in context of eco-criticism. But it should be noted that the field of eco-criticism has a vast
scope for further research as there are several authors contributing to green literature and several research lacunas in its theoretical that also requires an urgent attention.