The Beginnings:

Ecology and Ecocriticism

This Earth is a piece of the immeasurable expanse of the universe. An axiomatic truth certainly, however, it needs to be explored further. For this we would refer to the basics of cosmology which is also vital to the present study. The universe exists or simply "is" in a certain pattern or symphony, with each component playing a pre-determined 'note', contributing to the universal rhythm. The term 'rhythm' comes from the Sanskrit etymological root word 'rtha', from which the Hindi word ‘riiti’ is derived, that means method and 'order'. It is ‘order’ that underlies the creation of the universe. Nature’s design entails firstly that everything we have to work with is already here- the stones, the clay, the wood, the water, the air etc. Also, that all material given to us by nature is constantly returned to the earth, that is, it keeps on cycling. For example, the waste material or even death of one being is food or breeding ground for the other. The second principle is that the one thing driving nature to continually cycle itself through life is ‘energy’ which comes from outside the system in the form of perpetual solar energy. This solar energy is neither extracted from the past nor can be preserved for the future. It is current, in the moment, creating and cycling the constituents of the earth. Finally, the characteristic that sustains this complex and efficient system of metabolism and creation is ‘biodiversity’ and the miraculously intricate and symbiotic relationship amongst millions of diverse organisms. Nature, thus, follows a system, a rhythm to be in tune with the totality. This vision of totality is assimilation or a composite of different elements. Howarth says that “Lucretius reasoned that matter and process are inseparable, with all substance - rocks, water, grain - made by actions that either join or sunder.” *(The Reader)* Further each living or non-
living entity on this earth also plays its specific role. The whole purpose of 'being' here is to be in tune with "rtha" or the rhythm of nature and the pulse of this creation thereby participating in the 'dharma' of the cosmos. The word ‘dharma’ is derived from the Sanskrit verb $dhr$ which means ‘to hold’. Incidentally, the Hindi word $dharti$ meaning ‘earth’ also has $dhr$ embedded in it since the ‘earth’ holds everything contained in it. Dharma also holds, that is, binds the entire cosmos. One's natural ‘dharma’, determined by existence itself, thus resonates with the pulse of nature. So, it is natural for a bee to collect honey, for a mother to protect the young ones and for a snake to bite. The trees and plants rising up from the soil with the roots going down, the heat in fire or the flow in water all are part of the rhythm. Together, these infinite 'dharmas' relate and work in unison with the rhythm of the world and further with that of the universe. This ever evolving earth is also at times understood as a kind of super organism according to the Gaia theory of James Lovelock and Lynn Margulis.

The scientific study of this relationship between the various entities and the environment is the study of ‘ecology’. Ernst Haeckel, a German zoologist coined this word in 1866 or 1869. “Ecology inflected the Linnaean term natural economy (Worster 1985) from Oikonomia to Oikologia, house mastery to house study, a shift that changed species from resources into partners of a shared domain” (Howarth The Reader 73). The word ‘ecology’ comes from the Greek roots 'oikos' and 'logos'. ‘Oikos’ means ‘household’ and ‘logos’ means ‘logical discourse’. Together it means reasonable discourse of the earth household. The logical discourse will entail the basic principles or natural laws on which this planet household is based and how to measure and manage the relationship within this household.
Ecology is also closely related to physiology, evolutionary biology, genetics and ethology (ethos+logy). Ecosystems sustain every life supporting function on the planet, including climate regulation, water filtration, food, soil formation, fibres, medicines, erosion control, and many other natural features of scientific, historical or spiritual value. The eco systems of planet Earth are coupled with human environment. Ultimately, every manufactured product in human environments comes from natural systems. Eco-systems are considered common pool resources because eco-systems do not exclude beneficiaries. For example, a bumble bee pollinating a flower is an example of eco-system service, green spaces within communities provide sustainable health services that reduce mortality and regulate the spread of vector-borne diseases. Research shows that those who are more engaged with regular access to natural areas have lower rates of diabetes, heart disease and psychological disorders. These ecological health services are regularly depleted through urban development projects that do not factor in the common pool value of eco-systems.

Ecology then is the relationship of the living and non-living to their environment. Human relationship begins from home, then moves on to society and finally sublimates with the whole of the biotic and non-biotic community. The final sublimation is possible if the individual is able to be one with and accept and consider other living and non-living entities as part of the same existence as one self. ‘Deep Ecologist’ Arne Naess asserts that all living creatures have an inherent value and so should be treated at par. Such an identification is part of the process of ‘self-realization’ as Arne Naess reflects that increased ‘self-realization’ implies broadening and deepening of the self, such that,” protection of free nature is felt and conceived of as protection of our very selves.”(Thinking like a Mountain 29) ‘Broadening and deepening of the self” maybe likened to a drop of
water becoming one with the ocean. The process of fusion of this ‘drop of water’ with the whole happens when one goes beyond one’s ‘ego’ to realize oneself. If this is difficult to comprehend, then say John Seed and Joanna Macy “Think your next death. Will your flesh and bones back into the cycle. Surrender. Love the plump worms you will become.”(Thinking like a mountain 43). When the body dies, it becomes part of the earth from which may grow a living plant. Can one deny the role of the ‘earth’ therein? The non-living and the living keep intermingling and changing their forms. Nothing is insignificant. The whole of ecology therefore is valuable. Environmentalists agree that the life of every living being is valuable for itself that is its ‘intrinsic’ or inherent value. However, this valuation is not the same as ‘ecological value’ which is an ‘extrinsic value’ (valuable for others or external factors) that helps in sustaining the ecosystem, plants and living beings together with their environment, thus contributing to the wheel of life. This cycle of life is sustained when one being contributes to the life of another and so on, thus becoming a cog in the wheel of existence. Biologists tell us that humans make no such contribution and therefore have ‘nil’ ecological value in comparison to bacteria, worms, fungus, forests etc. without whom the whole ecosystem would collapse. However, if Homo sapiens disappear from the earth nothing will happen to the ecosystem. Another significant deduction that Griffin has made herein is that there is “an inverse relation that exists, in general between intrinsic value and ecological value.”(Worldviews 202) The sum totals of the intrinsic and extrinsic values remains the same for all species. So even if the whales, dolphins, and primates have very little and that humans do not have any ecological value but their intrinsic value is very high so that it balances their overall value. Therefore one cannot rule out the value of the developed primates including man. It is not easy to assume humans to
be just another species like worms or cats. Reason being we place ourselves at a much higher platform but Christopher Manes argues:

To privilege intellect or self-consciousness, as opposed to photosynthesis, poisoned fangs, or sporogenesis, may soothe ancient insecurities about humanity’s place in the cosmos, but it has nothing to do with evolutionary theory and does not correspond to observable nature. (The Reader 24)

However, North Whitehead asserts “… some types of beings have more capacity to realize intrinsic value than others, that this greater capacity includes both a greater range of potentialities that can be realized and a greater capacity for suffering, and that it is ethically appropriate, accordingly, to be especially concerned about not needlessly causing suffering in such beings or preventing the realization of their desires” (Worldviews 191-192). The above mentioned two views appear to be contradictory though they are not actually so, as shown by David Ray Griffin in his essay “Whitehead’s Deeply Ecological Worldview”. The intrinsic value is an innate or inner value that something has for itself or feels within. Such a value is possible only with things that can “experience” (Worldviews 192) for example a dog, buffalo or human being experiences pain on being hit with a stick, also such higher order of species, for example, understand ‘love’, though maybe not in the same way as humans. Mankind experiences more subtle forms of emotions related to its perception which are essential to the reality of the universe. This species is endowed with a higher intrinsic value and has consequently a “greater capacity to suffer” and also to enjoy. It has also the potential for ‘self-realization’ which may be achieved or thwarted. Then, it would be equally unethical and contradictory to deny or undo what nature has endowed them with. To deny them their innate potentialities to contribute more value to this earth
and bring them to the level of the species with little or no intrinsic worth would be gross and wrong. This quality of ‘experiencing’ cannot, however, simply divide the earth into humans and non-humans, or primates and others as Descartes and other dualists did. (Worldviews193) Since, the intriguing question that arises is that the brain which ‘experiences’ is itself “composed of matter(which is) devoid of experience.” Further, living beings are not the only ones composed of cells that “experience”, non-living beings also comprise of cells and molecules though these do not experience themselves, say for example, the molecules of a stone do not experience themselves as stone. Moreover ‘experience’ is an occasion at a given moment of time and subsequent ‘experience’ has the previous one ingrained in it. The first experience is intrinsic whereas in the next, the same becomes extrinsic. This is the basis of Whitehead’s philosophy according to Griffin “being present in another entity” (Worldviews 197) this realization of each experience being a composite of myriads of previous experiences is often overlooked by the species that has the capability to look deeper, that is man. The problem is that ‘experience’ is erroneously thought to be sensory in its import. As a result, “in sensory perception, the element of value is virtually lost” (Worldviews 199).‘Concern for ecology’ is an extrinsic value that arises with the realization that it is akin to all else. Thus, the whole of existence is valuable, interconnected and interdependent. This global consciousness is an endeavour to reorient our minds towards ecological ethics. Cognizance of this interconnection is the pathway to environmental ethics. ‘Ethics,’ then, does not entail any moral precepts given from above or outside. Instead, it emerges from within, in the visualization of the overall oneness of the universe, as Elder says about a Frost poems, many of the poems of these poets, too, are
... at once a meditation on the emotional meaning of nature and a stringent insistence that such meaning reflects our basic ignorance of nature.

(Armbruster 322)

The ‘emotional’ aspect is expressed by the whole being of the poet not just by his intellect alone which is possible when one is in unison with nature. An ‘interrelation’ between the different entities in the ecosystem is experienced and expressed, leading to a change in consciousness. Most of the time we, in our ignorance do not recognize the value additions that other beings make as also that they form the very basis of existence.

As one treads further, “A wealth of non-competitive joys is open to us” (Thinking like a Mountain 27). “Non-competitive joy” is a natural outpouring not an ethological happening. Action ensuing from this state of being will by itself be right, “a beautiful act”. “If we do what is right because of positive inclination, then, according to Kant, we perform a beautiful act” (Thinking like a Mountain 28), as opposed to following a commandment. A “beautiful act” is in itself a spiritual enhancement. This ‘spiritual venture’ needs to be a global effort to reorder and reorient our ways of living in the present times where, “…progress means inequality, reason means self-interest, and individualism means greed.” (Worldviews 24) The ancient religions and civilizations, as research has established, were more grounded and rooted, that is, they were very much a part of the environment they belonged to. The thought processes of the people, their life style and perceptions were intimately linked with their surroundings. Also, as opposed to the modern individualistic life style, interpersonal kinship relations were strong, and then the respect and connectedness with the ancestors established a primordial bonding. This contributed
towards a holistic life pattern of life and a participatory respect, understanding and acceptance rather than becoming masters of all else.

In the Indian ethos, to be in symphony with nature was the accepted way of living. Advaita Vedanta, the primal Hindu philosophy advocated the oneness of all life and considered the world as one family, ‘Vasudeva Kutumbhkam’. The entire universe is considered a living being, called “Viraat”, in the ancient Purusha Sukta. In the Bhagvad Gita, Sri Krishna compares the world to a single Banyan tree with unlimited branches of which all the animate and inanimate beings are a part. (BG 15.1-4), meaning thereby that all life and non-life are infused with individual spirits, the jiva. The Samkhya tradition reveres the five great elements, the panchmahabhuta, earth, water, fire, air, and space are the building blocks of physical reality. Various manifestations of nature, like mountains(e.g. Goverdhan) and rivers(e.g. The Ganges, the Yamuna, Saraswati even their confluence)trees(e.g. Bodhi tree or Tulsi) and animals(e.g. cow) are either worshipped or part of important ceremonies. Some rituals, like the first chappati made for the day in a household is meant for the dog in the street or keeping water and grain in a shallow trough for birds outside the homes, develop a consideration for other forms of life. The highest ethical standard thus became ‘Sarva Bhuta Hite’, (BG 5.25) meaning welfare of all beings. According to Atharva Veda

Maata bhoomi putro aham prithivyah (AV 12.1.12)

The Earth is likened to a ‘mother’ and is therefore to be respected and protected. Maintaining the ecological balance was thus well understood. Anuvaak 11 of Radra Namakam extends love and peace to the cosmic flow and outer space. The ‘Shantih Paath’ also says:
**Prithivi maater maa ma higme seeh**

Translated as, “Don’t, please don’t hurt Mother Earth”. Several Vedic hymns expressly instructed people not to harm the waters, vegetation and environment. There are various concerns about this earth and the role of humans specified in our scriptures. For instance, “Do not cut trees, because they remove pollution.” (Rig Veda, 6:48:17)“Do not disturb the sky and do not pollute the atmosphere.” (Shukla, Yajur Veda, 5:43)Destruction of forests is taken as destruction of the state, and reforestation an act of rebuilding the state and advancing its welfare. Protection of animals is considered a sacred duty according to Charak Samhita. No creature is superior to any other. Human beings are not above nature. Let no one species encroach over the rights and privileges of other species. (Isha Upanishad). *Ahimsa*, non-violence, is part of Hindu religion and the other religions that emerged here in India. This was the levelling and holistic perception of the ancients which dissuaded violence against ‘nature’ in any form. According to Vandana Shiva, a world-renowned scientist and environmental activist, ‘Earth Democracy’ is based on ‘the recognition of and respect for the life of all species and all people’. (Shiva) Here, she has also quoted the Isho Upanishad:

The universe is the creation of the Supreme Power meant for the benefits of [all] creation. Each individual life form must, therefore, learn to enjoy its benefits by forming a part of the system in close relation with other species. Let not any one species encroach upon other rights ...A selfish man over-utilizing the resources of nature to satisfy his own ever-increasing needs is nothing but a thief,
because using resources beyond one’s needs would result in the utilization of resources over which others have a right. (*Hope beneath Our Feet* 168)

The Chandogya Upanishad clearly shows humanity its true place in the world by relating them to the beasts and birds, grass and trees, animals together with the worms, flies and the ants.

We find that ancient Vedic literature contained ample awareness and consideration for the natural world. “Hinduism holds India’s mountains, rivers, and trees sacred, regarding them to be infused with individual spirits (jiva) and suffused with an all pervasive universal consciousness (brahman). Its religious metaphors speak of continuity and reciprocity…” (*Worldviews* 113). Even the knowledge of the herbs, plants, trees etc. was not mere material knowledge but a result of “interactions with living, spiritually empowered beings” (*Worldviews* 47) inhabiting them. This was a form of ‘animism’ which believed that all nature, animals, plants, mountains, forests, rivers and oceans were governed by spirits. So when lord Rama was to cross the ocean, he prayed to the God of the Ocean to let him pass. When a tree was to be cut again permission was requested from the god or spirit of the tree. Thus exploitation of nature never crossed their minds since nature was not taken for granted. In fact, every entity of nature existed in its own right and place which could not be transgressed morally, spiritually or physically.

There is another school of Indian philosophy, the Charvaka that is dubbed as being skeptic or religiously indifferent. However, this Eastern philosophy too believed in a form of naturalism which perpetrates that all things happen in nature, and come from nature (not from any deity or supreme being). A popular, oft-heard saying from this school of thought is:
Fire is hot, water cold,

Refreshingly cool is the breeze of morning,

By whom came this variety?

They were born of their own nature.

Buddhism, an Eastern philosophy considers existence to be a contextual process and an interdependent reality. Nothing exists in isolation. It is the human ego which thinks otherwise. Behind all sorrow in the world is this false alienation between oneself and the rest of the world. Buddhism strives to bridge this gap of human understanding. The significance of human consciousness is most important herein. Realization occurs in the movement from ignorance to wisdom. Wisdom dawns with the realization that mankind is a pawn in the game of chess, a part of the universal continuity of dynamic interdependence. This is the main thrust of ‘ecology’ also which has been integral to Buddhism too.

Jainism, another religion from the East, strives towards “harmonious coexistence with all beings.” (Worldviews 139) All organisms, everything, the whole evolving biosphere is heaven itself and that behind all sorrow in the world is this false alienation between oneself(humans) and the rest of the world. This earth is all that is of any significance. In pursuit of harmony, Jains believe in the ‘live and let live’ philosophy, in an inner attentiveness which embraces the outer form, the earth and all its beings. ‘Ahimsa’, non-violence is their core precept and for them all life is sacred. Even the job/work they undertake is generally eco-friendly. “It is ecological shepherding taken to its logical conclusion.”(Worldviews 143).
Taoism and Confucianism, both from Ancient China, arose before the birth of Christ. Both the traditions consider the universe to be ever evolving and continuous. The role of mankind is very significant here, since both consider harmony with nature as very important. However, Taoists see a passive contribution of humanity in this evolution and the Confucians visualize an active role therein. “The Taoists stressed the principle of non-egocentric action in harmony with nature for both ruler and followers...In order to understand and respect natural processes; we need a greater Taoist attention to the subtle unfolding of the principles and processes of nature.” (Worldviews 153) The Taoists emulate nature in order to encourage simplicity and spontaneity in people without being involved with society, in other words having a detached attitude. The Confucians, insist on “…harmonizing with the changing patterns in nature so as to adapt human action and human society appropriately to nature’s deeper rhythms.” (Worldviews 152) Taoism therefore values nature for its own sake not for any utilitarian needs. The human connection is of utmost importance in Confucianism. All relations begin with the individual, then move on in concentric circles from the family to society and finally merge with nature, the cosmos. This Confucian view has been dubbed as ‘anthropocosmic’. Nevertheless a mutually obligatory relationship between mankind and nature is established thereby to balance the human-earth nexus.

Japanese philosophy has been a fusion of both indigenous ‘Shinto’ and religions like Buddhism and Confucianism. ‘Shinto’ originated in pre-historic times as a religion which deified nature and adored it. ‘Shinto’ or ‘Kami’ mean ‘spirit’ or ‘philosophical path’ in Chinese language, from where it has been adopted. It is at times understood as being animistic, and at others inhabiting the natural forces in the world(mountains, rivers,
lightning, wind, waves, trees, rocks etc.). In Korea and Taiwan too ‘Shinto’ became the official religion, after Japan took over.

Animism or Totemism, another popular belief in the East, asserts that all of nature, be it animals, plants, mountains or rivers, land stretches, was animated by ‘spirits’, ‘living intelligences’ as they were called. Shamans and occasionally ordinary folk could communicate with them to bring back health and Prosperity. The polytheistic, animistic religions understood nature either as ‘Pantheism’ (everything is divine) or as ‘Panentheism’ (the divine is in everything). Cultures believing in animism could not exploit nature as for them ‘nature’ had an existence of its own which could not be transgressed. Nature was represented as something divine and hence venerable; for example, the ancient Japanese *kami* or the ancient Chinese Taoism for which living a good human life was being in harmony with nature. In Hinduism, Advaita Vedanta, the oneness of whole life or the world as one family was the scriptural dictum. The indigenous peoples, both in the past and the present, with a synthetic mode of thought and action, present a life in consonance with cosmology.

This has made not only the environmentalists sit up but also the literati. “Eco-criticism” as a result helps to relearn the ecological sensibility and attitude to increase our awareness of the ‘living’ earth. Apparently it was the West that began a serious questioning about human misdemeanours in ecology. However, it has been found that the torch bearers of American Transcendentalism, Emerson and Thoreau were inspired by Hinduism, Arne Naess applied his understanding of “non-dualism” (Vedantic philosophy) to conceive of “deep ecology”, study of Japanese Zen Buddhism brought forth the nature poetry of Gary Snyder. Western environmental philosophers have been influenced by ‘Taoism’, a ‘way of
life’ acquired by simply observing the flow of natural events (such as ‘water’, ‘gas,’ ‘fire’ etc.). “The concept of living in accordance with the tao of nature complements the evolutionary and ecological axiom that human beings are part of nature and must conform human ways of living to natural processes and cycles”. (Worldviews 36) This is to reiterate that ecological awareness was very much there in the past as it is in the present, in the East as well as the West. However, the present alarming state of environmental degradation calls for the aforesaid global environmental ethics which incorporates evolution, ecology & physics. Also by taking into cognizance the wide variety of the traditional cultural environmental ethos, this awareness will be an agent of change of ways of life. The ‘life ways’ of traditional cultures have been a “functional interaction of cosmology and cultural activity” (Worldviews 42). John Grim relates some of the rituals practiced by Native North Americans. For example ‘the Kettle Falls’ people living along the Columbia River forbade the use of the river for washing or toiletry since the salmon ‘people’ were spawning. It is important to note that the ‘salmon fish’ is referred to as ‘people’. Even the knowledge of the herbs, plants, trees etc. was not mere material knowledge but a result of “interactions with living, spiritually empowered beings” (Worldviews 47). Humans, in turn, reciprocated by fasting or cutting or marking parts of their bodies, avoiding waste, conservation in short non-harming action was conducted. A bond was, thus, created with the spiritual powers in the world. For the Apsaloke native North American, the sky is ‘father’ and mountain is ‘mother’. In another native North American tribe, Apache life way “Mountains and arroyos step in symbolically for grandmothers and uncles...life exists in things others might see as inanimate.” (Worldviews 50-52). All indigenous tribes know that everything in and around to be kin to us. Songs were sung to provide directions on living and about the resultant
interdependence of all life. “In the animistic religious view of primordial peoples, all of nature-animals, plants, mountains, forests, streams, landscapes- was animated by living intelligences(called “spirits”), with which both Shamans and ordinary people could be in communication”(Worldviews 167). However, the spiritual powers were variegated and that is why, perhaps, the Monotheistic traditions encountered problems with it. The polytheistic, animistic religions understood nature either as pantheism (everything is divine) or panentheism (the divine is in everything).

Cultures believing in Animism did not exploit nature because they believed that every entity of nature has a spirit of its own. Reading through ancient Hindu scriptures, like the Ramayana, one finds Lord Rama speaking to the plants and animals while looking for Sita, or praying for permission from the Ocean to cross it to go to Lanka. These are not merely fairy tales but a way of life in those communities. Some tribes of French or West Sudan worship trees. Trees are representations of the ‘Earth’ and the ‘Forest’ “the two great divinities of productivity”. (Green History28-29) Sacrifices of the ‘hen’ or ‘millet-meal’ are offered to trees. If a tree has to be cut, its spirit is first of all worshipped and permission taken to cut it. The ‘Tree-spirit’ is then requested to leave the tree which is to be cut. For the ancient world, every entity of nature existed in its own right and place which could not be transgressed morally, spiritually or physically. Yet we find that Plato (428-347 B.C.) laments the erosion of the soil due to indiscriminate felling of trees in his times (Green History36). The Mesopotamians considered nature to be monstrous. For them domestication was the answer to control ‘wild nature’. Rome, the intellectual hub of yore, was witness to animal cruelty and ‘exploitative agriculture’. One of the main reasons for collapse of Roman civilization is said to be ‘lead poisoning’. (Green history 32-33) All this
is to point out that the earliest ‘urban’ civilization were responsible for exploitation of nature. During the ‘Middle Ages’ the ‘Great Chain of Being’ was depicted as a grand design where mankind was the highest form on this earth. Everything else was either lower or of no consequence. Renaissance overtook it with Humanism as its beacon call. “In the Jewish Tradition, nature is neither an abstraction nor an ideal, but rather one of the realms in which humans interact with God.” (Worldviews 55) Also, the belief is that human beings are created in the image of God (according to the Christian and the Baha’i faith) that the world belongs to God and he has entrusted the care of the earth to humans. In the Genesis 1:28, however, God instructs mankind to dominate the earth and use it for his needs. This has been variously interpreted as stewardship, or like the Talmud even destruction has been endorsed for economic gain, Islam/ Allah deputes sovereignty over all creation to humans. Thus, it may be noted that this is in contrast with the sacred reverence for the natural world that eastern religions like Buddhism and Hinduism have or the ancient American civilizations practiced.

However, philosophy among Greeks slowly emerged out of religious awe and wonder about the principles and elements of the nature. The earliest Greek philosophers focussed their attention upon the origin and nature of the physical world. Hippocrates and Aristotle, prominent Greek philosophers recorded notes and observations on the natural history of plants and animals. The concept of Gaia, the Earth as mother was also a Greek tradition. Pythagorus (c.580-c.500 B.C.) the mathematician advocated vegetarian mysticism. It was a given dictum to follow the laws of nature which is also the basic premise of ‘ecology’. All this is not to say that the civilizations of yore were more evolved than the present mind. It was more out of awe and fear of the natural entities and not so comfortable a life as at
present that veneration for nature stood ground in the past. As mankind started finding alternatives to solve his physical discomforts, his struggle with nature reduced and so did his respect for it.

William Howarth states that the “holistic approach” started waning in the Middle Ages due to increase of knowledge. The integral understanding of existence, suffered a setback through the ‘Middle ages’ and further lost its bearings in the modern era, resulting in threats to the environment and as a consequence to humanity. Things changed when the sundering began. Together with this, the movement of people towards city life shifted human focus from nature to social living. Thus, humanity at large started taking nature for granted. The end of middle ages saw the opposite tendencies reflected in the mysticism of Eckhart (c.1260-c.1327), the greatest German mystic who dwelled upon the relationship of soul and God. The middle ages gave way to Renaissance. The philosophical minds of the 17th century turned to exploring the foundations of physical sciences. Faith and grace started taking a back seat and epistemology came to the forefront. The 19th century, a time of great philosophical diversity, discovered the irrational, and in so doing prepared the way for the 20th century oppositions between logical atomism and phenomenology and between logical positivism and existentialism. Gradually with the advent of science, mankind started considering itself as the master of everything and the industrial culture further strengthened the anthropocentricity and depleted the environmental ethics. Humans started valuing themselves more than anything else in the world. Medical science drastically improved the statistics of life which resulted in increase of world population. It is assumed that over population is the root cause of environmental depletion. The West conveniently points fingers at the Eastern countries for this predicament. D’Eaubonne asks “How …can
they talk about the dangers of overpopulation when the American people are known for consuming 45 per cent of the natural resources of the planet?” (Gaard 19)

In recent times, Darwin’s theory of evolution and quantum physics has established that humans are a constituent of nature, just another species intimately connected to the web of the universe. This paved the way to deglamorize mankind. Though it’s not been easy to step down from the pedestal, the reality, now, can no longer be evaded because of the crisis of environmental degradation and its aftermath visible all over the earth. It is found that the integrated attitude suffered a further setback “through the Islamic refinement of mathematics and the dividing of Christian universities into separate science-language curricula. Descartes’ rationalism further exaggerated that split…” This divisive way of looking at the world affected our actions. Mankind started considering itself to be the masters of the universe. This anthropocentric vision of mankind, that is man’s ‘tragic flaw’, gripped the ethos. Somewhere in the garb of progress, humans tampered with the natural rhythm of the universe. This has disturbed the relationship of living and non-living, humans and animals, since man’s conduct is now no longer in synchronicity with nature. Seasons have shifted; the ozone layer is breached and the arctic ice is melting raising the ocean levels. Dangerous side effects are visible now with newer Inventions, excessive use of non-combustible materials such as plastics, use of air-conditioners, automobiles etc. Three planetary thresholds have already been crossed including (1) biodiversity loss (2) climate change (3) nitrogen cycles. The world’s fisheries and oceans, for example, are facing dire challenges as the threat of global collapse appears imminent, with serious ramifications for the well-being of humanity. The ecology of the planet is further threatened by global warming, acid rain etc. Disrespect towards nature and its less
fortunate creatures having come in vogue, in turn affected relationship at all levels. Even for simple calculations we depend on gadgets, we no longer need to remember the ways to reach our destination since the google tracker is so handy. Such luxuries have affected the whole social and natural structure. Lifestyle diseases have become a recurring malaise; pollution levels are crossing all limits due to automobile glut, relationships are dependent on material satisfaction alone etc. hence become meaningless in the long run. All this excess gratification has forced the human world to rethink about the, so called, progress by changing our focus to higher realms leading towards spirituality. Therefore, Fromm says: “If a need for transcendence does exist today….It is a need based on satiety and not on deprivation”. (The Reader 33) Endless hankering after clothes, food, gadgets, property, even knowledge gives keeps man unhappy and hence satiated with material goods. Deep Ecology emphasizes eco centric values, according to which human beings are not the masters but just part of nature. Human relationships are also affected by ecological orientation. For instance, the slight awareness of the significance of thinking about ecology has made society formulate rules for garbage disposal, male-female equality, restraining from excess use of natural resources etc. The state provides equal opportunity to men and women so that ‘Woman’ is no longer the male bastion; just as ‘nature’ is not merely a usable commodity for Homosapiens instead mankind is only a part of ‘nature’. Education and knowledge have become more integrative and inter-disciplinary. The general lifestyle of people who have become aware of human over reaching has undergone a marked change. One finds a fusion of different styles in fashion, music, cuisine across the globe because of this ecological vision. Humanity is dreading war and disintegration to move towards human, environmental and creative concerns. This is present day spirituality that
labours to integrate rather than alienate. However, it is still a long way to go. The havoc that human mind has strewn upon the earth is not easy to put back in order. Technological power has tampered with nature to its detriment. Meditating on a restoring action from all fronts is the call of today. Science and spirituality have already joined hands to reveal that divinity is in and around us, in other beings, not only in living but also in non-living entities. Also, since mankind seems to be the only species which is ‘self-aware and death-aware’, the onus of maintaining a healthy relationship with the rest of the earth, lies on it.

However, it’s not easy to retract one’s steps. How many of us, for example, would opt for natural village living under thatched roofs, in place of the AC fitted concrete houses or go walking to our work place instead of hopping into the car. Enforcement helps a little. If the shopkeeper, due to stringent government rules has stopped providing poly bags then we think of alternatives. We are still not ready, though, to change our mindset because our present relationship with nature is that of, what Dana Phillips calls, “use-value” (The Reader 220) only. Thus, we see a forest as a “standing-reserve”, natural oil or coal as “oil reserve” or “coal reserve” (Heidegger) instead of acknowledging their intrinsic value and place in the overall scheme of things. Preserved nature in the form of art or packaged eatables is a resource and hence valuable economically but detrimental to the environment. Even literature which uses nature merely as a backdrop without acknowledging its identity is doing a disservice to ecology. Literature has an important role to play here, as it works on both the mind and the heart. It gives mankind the clarity of thought to visualize the enormous misdeeds of humanity on the ‘earth dwelling’. The catastrophes are not an overnight occurrence. Tampering with the natural systems has become the bane of Homo sapiens. Studies and warnings as to its deleterious effects have made little dent into the
psyche. Laws and rules are few and inconsequential and complexities are enormous. ‘Religion’ and ‘culture’ establish the value system in a society. However, it has been found that majority of religions and cultures are anthropocentric in their vision so as to tear mankind away from valuing the eco system hence the need of literature/poetry to take over the reins. Art/Literature is one field which takes one’s thought processes through the personal to the impersonal, into ecology. Northrop Frye says that “the goal of art is to recapture, in full consciousness, that original lost sense of identity with our surroundings” (qtd. by Everdeen in The Reader 99). The intervention of literature has become paramount. So, Literature for ecology becomes our arena here. Says Tu Wei-ming:

Far sighted ecologists, engineers, economists, and earth scientists, intent on developing a communal critical self – consciousness for ‘saving spaceship earth,’ have made an appeal to poets, priests, artists, and philosophers for their active participation in this intellectual and spiritual joint venture to make our habitat, our home, safe for generations to come. The felt need to focus our attention on ethics, values, and religions as ways of “caring for the planet and reducing its rate of impoverishment” is urgent. (Worldviews 20-21).

In Eastern religion and philosophy, Selvamony reflects “…the cosmos stands in the foreground and the human being in the background. In the Abrahamic (Judeo-Christian-Islamic) world view the individual stands in the foreground and the cosmos does in the background.” (Essays in Ecocriticism 31) So, Eastern religion originally imbibed the attitude of ‘reverence’ towards rest of nature and the Abrahmic inculcated a sort of ‘arrogance’ in assuming ‘man’ to be the lord over all existence. However, later on even the
Eastern mindset started following its Western counterpart due to the benefit of comfort level. So, the ‘earth’ is taken to be for the well-being of mankind alone. Modern ecology has also not gotten over this idea. Instead it is devising cleverer means to hoodwink ‘nature’ by treating it better so that it serves humans for a longer time. The anthropocentric attitude still underlying all the modern innovations and techniques one cannot expect any fundamental change in society. Of late awareness of this colossal human blunder of unnecessary accumulation seems to have somewhat dawned. Mankind is now resorting to cross cultural appreciation and restitution as also comprehension of the ancient and contemporary religions and civilizations. “The change that is required of us is not some new resistance to radiation, but a change in consciousness. Deep ecology is the search for a viable consciousness”. (Thinking like a mountain 38) Therefore it is important for the basic mind set, the consciousness, of the people to change. The evolution of ‘Consciousness’ to ‘serve’ instead of trying to ‘save’ the earth, by letting go off the vanity of mankind in assuming to be the manager of the ‘spaceship earth’, would result in what Selvamony calls ‘an integrative oikos’. This is possible when Homo sapiens realize themselves to be simply one of the creatures on this earth living with an abundance of non-human nature. Non-Human nature is not only other living creatures and trees and plants alone but also the so called non-living entities such as the stones, the wind or the river etc. which seemingly form a complete picture. This apparently complete picture has not yet taken into cognizance that aspect which is unseen by the human eye. Only in an ‘integrative oikos’ can one hope to venture in to the unseen ‘beyond’, which itself is not something out there. At best it is a vague recognition of the vast ‘beyond’ which can never be the complete picture. However, it may be understood as an organic wholeness of the world, which, in the
words of D.H. Lawrence, is “the wave that cannot halt,” an on-going process where “…every moment can be a step into the wholeness of remembered gardens.” (Elder 179-184) These ‘remembered gardens’ of the past could be anything between the origin of life to a connection between life and non-life, or human and non-human. Rationalism and scientific awareness alone cannot help much in this direction. They stop short at calculated reality since ‘existence’ is much more than what eyes can see and the mind can fathom.

One may learn about all the parts of a flower and their functions but its beauty remains unexplainable and untouched. A state of wonder begins an inward journey leading to effortless participation which helps to assimilate the oneness of the earth in order to identify with it. Thus one goes beyond the ‘obvious to the senses,’ to peep into the unfathomable, which is applicable to all existence. This vision of the unknown generates “a tender concern for all growing things, a worship of the immediate present… (arising) from attentiveness to the things of the world, as opposed to reliance on logical projections as to how things should be” (Elder 175-176). The response to ‘nature’ now is no longer mechanical but participatory. For participation, ‘nature’ has to be heard. This sounds strange to us since we are used to only human beings speaking. The reality, however, is that animals, birds, and plants, that is all living beings and even the non-living ones like the stones, the mountains, the seas, the wind everything speaks but we do not hear them. In order to understand their language no special vocabulary is required only an open heart to feel and communicate non-verbally with the whole. Then nature cannot misused, for “people do not exploit a nature that speaks to them” (The Reader 16). In Christopher Manes words: “Attending to ecological knowledge means metaphorically relearning ‘the language of birds’- the passions, pains, and cryptic intents of the other biological communities that
surround us and silently interpenetrate our existence.” (The Reader) Through ‘poetry’ one may touch the ecological strands to come face to face with the reality of interdependence and correlation in existence. Poetry of this order may delve deep into a specific, localized culture but conforms to the larger ecosphere. This expansion from ‘a literature of place’ to the Infinite affirms that “nature is a structure of evolving processes.” (Elder) and literature based on such an evolution would reflect such a flux. Like Ezekiel says in the poem “The Cur”: reflecting the thoughts of a gangrenous dog:

I too am life,

The image seems to say,

Air, earth, fire, water…

The poet creates awareness of similar elements of which humans too are composed. The narrator, however, turns a blind eye to:

Light a cigarette,

And think of horrors less remote. (Ezekiel 95)

To avoid, look aside or turn deaf ears to nature is the bane of humanity; however “Indifference alone is un redeemable.” (Ezekiel, ‘Prayer’ 101) Poets shake up this ‘indifference’, here by showing a mirror unto oneself, in order to make mankind aware of the stark reality. The gangrenous dog is left uncared for on the road, his pain is not given any cognizance. So, the poet is trying to coax humanity out of its stupor by relating the elements that constitute the being.

…some strains of deep ecology have stressed the link between listening to the nonhuman world (i.e., treating it as a silenced subject) and reversing the
environmentally destructive practices modern society pursues. (*The Reader* 16)

The elements connect everything that exists; thereby they play their ‘part in an immensely complex global system, in which energy, matter, and ideas interact.’ (Introduction, *The Reader* xix) ‘Eco criticism’ studies this relationship between literature and ecology. It works on the primordial principles and castigates cultural misdemeanours to coax the reader to carve out an alternative view of existence so that there can be a reorientation of the relationship with the earth. This establishes an ecological literacy in society, an ideological foundation which is necessary for any change in the scenario. To quote Neil Evernden: “Environmentalism involves the perception of values, and values are the coin of the arts.” (*The Reader* 103)

Literature has pulled up its socks to discover grounds for reconciliation. From “estrangement to transformation and reintegration- poets enact a circuit of healing,” says John Elder. (Introduction, p.1, *Imagining the Earth*) Inter disciplinary research has come in vogue. Literature today aims to “redirect human consciousness to a full consideration of its place in a threatened natural world.” (Glen A. Love, “Revaluing Nature”, *The Reader* 237) In Literature, the poetic form has been the most ancient and the most effective one in all cultures and ages. Poetry cajoles the value system which is the fulcrum of human existence. It gathers the whole in the particulars, the scientific in the aesthetic, and the factual in the creative that makes for a wholesome understanding of this unfathomable expanse of which we are a part. Both literature/poetry and ecology have something in common, both are ‘creative’ in principle and affect all by dealing with the basics without imposing rules from outside. This world is much more than what our senses can see, touch,
hear, taste or smell. Poetry takes us to the other realm which science may also accept but often forgets the import of “the importance and connectedness of every detail of nature.” (Elder 167) Critical understanding of such literature or aspects of ecological viewpoints therein becomes very relevant here. This is where, according to Richard Kerridge, “...ecocriticism seeks to evaluate texts and ideas in terms of their coherence and usefulness as responses to environmental crisis” (Garrard 4).

William Rueckert, who is probably the first to use the term “ecocriticism” (Barry 249), postulates that: “A poem is stored energy...a living thing, a swirl in the flow. Poems are energy pathways which sustain life. Poems are verbal equivalent of fossil fuel (stored energy), but they are a renewable source of energy, coming, as they do, from those ever generative twin matrices, language and imagination”. (The Reader 108) Poetry has been the oldest form of creative expression throughout human history. The plays by Kalidas and Shakespeare are ‘store houses of energy’; as is the epic poem Kamayani by Jai Shankar Prasad or Milton’s Paradise Lost. What is even more significant is that they are “ever-living, inexhaustible sources of stored energy, whose relevance does not derive solely from their meaning, but from their capacity to remain active in any language and to go on with the work of energy transfer...” (The Reader 108) The ultimate source and flow of energy, the Sun, is unidirectional. However, the history of mankind through “language and imagination” has worked out poetry as the “renewable source of energy”. In the process, “What a poem is saying is probably always less important than what it is doing and how - in the deep sense - it coheres” (The Reader110). Coherence is what happens when one encounters a great poem. An aptly well- recited poem evokes a response akin to a single candle lighting a whole class room full of them.
Rueckert also perceives that “the greatest conceptual contribution of the ecological view is the perception of the world and evolution as a creative process.” Creation means the evolving of something new and imaginative, repetition does not come in its purview. In this creative process, energy from the sun is stored in green plants, which in turn provides life and sustenance to the world. Similarly, the energy from the poets is stored in the poems. Thus poems become “green plants” since they are capsules of stored energy and the poets are “suns”. The energy stored in the poems is released when they are read by the perceptive reader/critic/teacher. Just as the order in a poem, if disturbed, will render it ineffective or worthless, similarly, the order of nature, if tampered with, will create havoc and destruction. Likewise,

“All the creative processes of the biosphere, including the human ones, may well come to an end if we cannot find away to determine the limits of human destruction and intrusion which the biosphere can tolerate, and learn how to creatively manage the biosphere” (The Reader 112).

‘Composition’ by humans with imagination and perception can help to ‘creatively manage the biosphere’. This is where the role of poets and critics acquires significant import. The point to be pondered upon here is precisely, what Rueckert also says in the essay, “literature and Ecology”:

“...how (can) reading, teaching, and writing about literature might function creatively in the biosphere, to the ends of biospheric purgation, redemption from human intrusions, and health?” (Rueckert 112) Literature and all the processes revolving around it are a sure way to ignite ecological
consciousness. ‘Human intrusions’ that are responsible for the disturbed natural state of things in the present times are subtly addressed in literature and brought to the forefront by eco-critics. Thereby helping to get rid of the “anthropocentric (as opposed to bio-centric or ecocentric) vision, and his (man’s) compulsion to conquer, humanize, domesticate, violate, and exploit every natural thing.” *(The Reader)* 113.

Thus, viewing literature with an ecological insight, as teachers and eco-critics, we attempt to unravel the eco-vision behind the literature in hand. In the process, we help develop the ecological sensibility and attitude which results in symbiotic application on the practical front. It is a reciprocal relationship, says John Elder “Just as natural phenomena can reground a poem’s language for us, so too can poetry mediate and heighten our awareness of the living earth” *(Beyond Nature Writing)* 320). It is also important to note that this vision opens a new vista of reality, that is, everything is not just socially or linguistically constructed, as is presumed by literary theorists of yore. Reality/nature exists as such. It is a definite presence which is to be acknowledged and respected. We humans are only one of the pieces of a grand jigsaw puzzle of the universe. The other pieces comprise of the rest of the animal and plant life together with the non-life entities like the mountains, the rivers, the air and everything else. Every piece is connected to another to form the sublime design of nature. Thus, Rueckert goes on to state that “The first law of ecology - that everything is connected to everything else - applies to poems as well as to nature.” *(The Reader)* 110) Without the awareness of this connection there will always be something amiss that proves detrimental to the overall scheme of things. Humanity has lost this sense of ‘oneness’ to work asunder and therefore is now facing the consequences of its
mammoth blunder. All are concerned and so are the eco-centrists, both the poets and the eco-critics.

India has a claim to developing its own model of ecocriticism by the term ‘Oikopoetics’ enunciated by Professor Nirmal Selvamony of Chennai, who is the founder director of the ‘organisation for the study of literature and environment’ (OSLE- India). The Department of English, Madras Christian College, Chennai was teaching a course on ‘Tamil Poetics’ since 1985. Later it was “reformulated to include readings from Western Eco criticism and accordingly renamed ‘Eco literature’” (Selvamony). In the year 2004 an international conference was held on “Eco criticism” in Chennai where OSLE-India initiated a forum for Eco critical dialogue. This conference retained the original Greek word ‘Oikos’ meaning “household”. ‘Oikos’, the household, may begin from individual families, and then move on to include organisms, both living and non-living in their collective habitat. Another related term to this concept that Selvamony distinguishes is ‘Tinai poetics’. Tinai means ‘to join’ and its philosophy is to live for the other. ‘Living for the other’ would by its corollary mean having love for the other. Now ‘love’ here is neither sporadic nor a feeling for a specific entity. In the Tamil speaking regions of South India, it was a way of life from the past which embraces everything, the whole ecosystem. Selvamony explains that, “Earth is tinai because it is an unbroken continuum out of the compacting of sand, rock, soil and other substances... By extension, tinai can also refer to any specific place on earth; especially, a house with its own land surrounding it, a homestead... third, namely ‘human community indigenous to a specific ecoregion’...when tinai refers to non-material firmness, then it means ‘conduct’” (Tinai 3). He further reveals that “tinai was the predominant social order and it was part of Tamil convention. After the
introduction of caste system in Tamil Nadu, tinai came to be associated with art ...” Art is poetry which ‘joins’, brings into its fold all and everything. A tinai society respects diversity to include the tiniest of things or creatures in its ambit. In Ancient Greece, ‘Oikos’ meant nearly the same thing as ‘Tinai’. ‘Oikos’ was a nexus of nature, humans and the spirit beings; a relationship that took into cognizance all in unison. However there was “no known theory ...of the ‘oikos’ in Greece”. (Selvamony, Introduction xii). Selvamony asserts that early Tamilians had formulated the theory of Tinai many centuries before. The earliest source of this theory is the most ancient Tamil text extant Tolkaappiyam composed between the 1st and 4th centuries CE and contains Tamil Grammar and rhetoric, poetry and poetics. In this encyclopaedia of the Sangam age, ‘tinai’ or “...Oikos houses the harmonious relationship of the human and the nonhuman; it is something that integrates specific space and time, naturo-cultural elements and human action” (Essays in Ecocriticism 217). When ‘Tinai’ started being associated with ‘art’, literature studies became influenced by this philosophy. The ‘tinai’ method does not involve scientific calculations but touches upon the ‘sacred’ as also the ‘land-time ethic’. It is also not limited to life or ‘bios’ as the only basis of existence but earth as a unit which includes all of non-life and non-human too. All together life, non-life and the sacred form the subject matter of ‘Tinai’ or ‘Oikos’. Ecocriticism has accordingly been termed as ‘Oikocriticism’ which explores non-hierarchic ‘continuity’ in diversity as opposed to ‘oneness’ of all entities in an Oikos. This Sangam period of Tinai has now been unearthed by The OSLE India group spear headed by Dr. Nirmal Selvamony in reviving this ancient theory to reveal India as a precursor in yet another field.
The eco-critical approach towards literary texts was given a clarion call in the West by Cheryll Glotfelty of the U.S.A. when she was a graduate student in 1989 at the WLA (the Western Literature Association) conference. In 1992, she became the co-founder of ASLE (Association for the study of literature and environment). In 1996, she, along with Harold Fromm, edited *The Eco criticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, University of Georgia press. This has come to be recognised as the bible of Ecocriticism. Similar studies were also initiated in the U.K. by various critics. Prominent among those are Jonathan Bate, Laurence Coupe, and Greg Garrard. However, Peter Barry points out that, “The infrastructure of eco-criticism in the U.K. is less developed than in the U.S.A. (there are as yet no indigenous journals or formal bodies for eco-critics to join, though there is a U.K. branch of ASLE)” (Barry 250-251). The term more in vogue in U.K. is “Green Studies”. The U.K. collection of essays in the year 2000 is *The Green Studies Reader: from Romanticism to Ecocriticism*, edited by Laurence Coupe. However, U.K. dates the eco-centric approach back to British Romanticism of the 1790’s. Thus, the nature poets, Wordsworth and the other Romantics, are regarded by the ‘green theorists’ as the first to be concerned about nature. However, portraying ‘nature’ as a background and ‘concern for nature’ may entail entirely different perspectives. The former may be “an anthropomorphic construct” without any concern for nature as such, at best only a place of sojourn, but the latter is “to warn us of environmental threats emanating from governmental, industrial, commercial, and neo-colonial forces” (Barry 251).

The American writers (called Transcendentalists) whose work is representative of ecocentric points of view are Emerson (1803-1662), Margaret Fuller (1810-1850) and Henry D. Thoreau (1827-1862). Together they formed “the first major literary movement
in America to achieve cultural independence from European models” (Barry 249). Contemporary nature poets of America, with an eco-centric thrust, are Robinson Jeffers, Gary Snyder, Wendell Berry, Robert Pack, Rachel Carson, Gary Snyder, A.R. Ammonsetc. Some poets from England are: John Clare & Mary Reynolds Thompson and a known French poet, Anjela Duval. Jonathan Bate, the author of *Romantic Ecology: Wordsworth and the Environmental Tradition* (Routledge, 1991), further qualifies Green Studies into ‘Light Greens’ and ‘Dark Greens’. The former believe that nature environs humanity and that human beings can bring about a change in the ecology by being more responsible in “forms of consumption and production” whereas the ‘dark greens’ or ‘deep ecologists’ are more radical when they disregard the term ‘environment’ because of its anthropocentric connotations and believe that ‘nature’ exists and has an identity of its own. All these assertions and counter assertions point to an important turn of events. Literature and its criticism will no longer be dubbed as a hammering around words and expressions. As Kate Soper accentuates it, “It isn’t language which has a hole in its ozone layer.” (Barry 252) We, who are deeply involved with literature, are rising up to explicate and zero in on the eco-centric element in the “renewable source of energy”, that is poetry, in order to help bring back the holistic approach of the past to set the ‘earth household’ in place. Social concerns like ‘global warming’, ‘animal rights’ issues, ‘pollution’, ’diminishing natural resources’ etc. are popping their heads out in Literature for the critics to drum up attention towards them. The eco-critical approach would in turn help in bringing about changes in outlook and response. Eco critics, however, have to do their share of work to unravel the deeper insights at times.
The central endeavour, then, of any ecological poetics would have to be a working model for the processes of transformation which occur as one moves from the stored creative, energy of the poem, to its release by reading, teaching, or writing, to its transmutation into meaning, and finally to its application, in an ecological value system. (Rueckert *The Reader* 120)

It is a move in the direction of “art (literature) for ecology” rather than “art for art sake”. ‘Art’ is creativity and it would have no meaning if we continue to overstep nature since Nature is Art incarnate and our relationship with ‘nature’ is primordial to our being. Interconnectedness being the first law of Ecology and as Glotfelty quotes Barry Commoner “Everything is connected to everything else” (Introduction, *The Reader*) the connection between Literature and the environment becomes the focus here. Indian writers that have already been studied with an ecocritical perspective are: Rabindra Nath Tagore, Jhumpa Lahiri and Salman Rushdie in *Indian Journal of Ecocriticism*, Vol.2, Aug.2009, for work on Amitav Ghosh, Mahashweta Devi, R.K.Narayan, and a couple of poems each of Ezekiel and Ramanujan *Essays in Ecocriticism was the source*, for V.S. Naipaul, Kiran Desai, Keki N. Daruwalla and Aravind Adiga *Contemporary Contemplations on Ecoliterature* ed. Suresh Frederick. Selected poems by Nissim Ezekiel, A.K.Ramanujan and Kamala Das have been taken up in this dissertation to unravel the connection with the natural world therein. The response of the poets may not necessarily be pointedly towards the environmental crisis yet in the poems taken up there is definitely revealed a common thread between the human world and nature. This thread is a strand of the web of relationship between the two above and their mutual inter dependence. Nonetheless ‘nature’ is not the ‘other’ as hitherto envisaged but ‘man’ is a dispensable part of the vast
known and unknown world. In all the three poets the Tinai concepts of ‘life, non-life, land

time ethic and the sacred’ become the subject matter of their creativity. Hence, ecocritical
assessment of such poetry becomes “…the systematic application of holistic(deep)
ecological concepts to cultural texts”.(Introduction, Essays in Ecocriticism xix)
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