INTRODUCTION

The northeastern region of India, casually stereotyped and commonly referred to as ‘the Northeast’ is a geographical area of 2.55 lakh square kilometers that actually comprises eight different states namely Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura, which have huge cultural, linguistic, ethnic, or religious differences among them. The region covers 7.8 per cent of the country’s total area, shares only 2 per cent of its boundary with India, while the remaining 98 per cent is shared with the international borders of Bangladesh, Bhutan, Myanmar, China and Nepal. It is linked to the rest of the country by a narrow corridor which is referred to as the Chicken’s Neck’.

The region is a melting pot where the brown and the yellow races meet, where the tradition and culture of different tribes and ethnic groups mingle, and where there is a rich storehouse of different languages and dialects of these multi-ethnic people. There are tribes still following traditional ‘animistic’ faiths those are ‘woven around forest ecology’ and profess ‘co-existence with the natural world’ (Dai 2006: xi), even though religions like Hinduism (particularly in the states of Assam, Manipur, Tripura and Sikkim), Christianity (in the hills of Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland), Buddhism (in Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim) and Islam (particularly in the state of Assam and other parts of the region) have made a dominant presence.

An immensely rich archive of some rare species of flora and fauna, the Northeast India is quite rich in biodiversity. The region contains more than one-third of the country’s total biodiversity. It is considered one of the 18 biodiversity hotspots of the world having about 8000 varieties of flowering plants, 700 varieties of orchids, 58 varieties of bamboos, 64 species of citrus, 28 species of conifers, 500 varieties of
mosses, 700 varieties of ferns and 728 lichen species. The region has also rich faunal
diversity. An estimated 3624 species of insects, 50 molluscs, 236 fishes, 64
amphibians, 137 reptiles, 541 birds and 160 mammalian species have been identified
so far (Barik et al, 2000). The following figures highlight the biodiversity significance
of the region:

- Most of the NE states have more than 60% of their geographical area
  under forest cover.
- 51 forest types are found in the region broadly classified into six
  major forest types, viz., tropical moist deciduous forests, tropical
  semi evergreen forests, tropical wet evergreen forests, subtropical
  forests, temperate forests and alpine forests.
- Out of the 9 important vegetation types of India, 6 are found in the
  NE region.
- According to the India Red Data Book published by the Botanical
  Survey of India in 2003, 10% of the total flowering plants in the
  country are endangered. Of the 1500 endangered floral species, 800
  are reported from NE India. (Hegde 2000:2)

The region with its mountains, hills, rivers, valleys, people, myths, legends, rites and
rituals is blessed with a unique ecology. It is a part of the great tropical rainforest that
spreads out from the foothills of the Himalayas to the tip of the Malaysian Peninsula
and the mouth of the Mekong River.

The Northeast India is also the abode of about 225 tribes, out of 450 in the
country (Myers 2000:853). Almost all these tribes have rich oral traditions. The oral
history of these tribes “tells of ancestors from the shadowy past, from mountains steeped in mist and romance, from lands far away, of snake gods and princesses, epic battles and great warriors”(Hazarika1994: xviii). Besides having rich oral literatures, some states like Assam and Manipur in particular, have literary histories that date back to centuries. Writing in English from Northeast as a discourse of self-expression took shape casually in the eighties and the nineties of the twentieth century. The writers writing in English from this region at present are the first generation of writers. They already have attained a legitimate as well as a powerful voice by articulating their senses and sentiments and by focusing on some of the core issues of the region. The ethos and milieu of their respective communities are some of the dominant preoccupations of these multi-ethnic writers. “The writer from the Northeast differs from his counterpart in the mainland in a significant way. While it may not make him a better writer, living with the menace of the gun he cannot merely indulge in verbal wizardry and woolly aesthetics but must perforce master the art of witness. As a natural aftermath to the above, our society has been reduced to a mute witness to the banality of corruption and the banality of terror…We think the task that literature of the Northeast must address is what Albert Camus called ‘the double challenge of truth and liberty’.(Nongkynrih & Ngangom 2003: ix-x). Aruni Kashyap, an Assamese writer writing in English, while commenting on the legitimacy and uniqueness of this rich body of writing, says (as mentioned by Utpal Borpujari in an article), “Due to the troubled relationship with the narrative of the Indian state which north-east shares with India, the writers have something very different to say than the other Indian-English authors. Apart from having different sensibilities, it’s the political nature of these writings which make them different. The fraught relationship most of the North-eastern states have with the centre often gets reflected in the
literature, be it in English, Assamese or Bodo. The fact that literary circles have been discussing ‘literature from NE’ as a different body of work, attests that it is in developing in opposition to Indian-English writing, which probably mirrors the fraught relationship NE has with Delhi” (Borpujari 2011: http://www.timescrest.com). Tilottoma Misra says about the nature of writing in English from Northeast India in *The Oxford Anthology of Writings from North-East India: Poetry and Essays*, “An intense sense of awareness of the cultural loss and recovery that came with the negotiation with ‘other’ cultures is a recurrent feature of the seven north-eastern states. Each small community or linguistic group has responded through its oral or written communication to the encounters with the majoritarian cultures from either mainland India or from outside the borders of the country, in its own distinctive manner.” (Misra 2011: 3)

Margaret Chalthantluangi Zama, who is a Professor of English literature, a writer, translator and a social activist from Mizoram, seems to be quite right in her observation when she opines:

The term “North East” is a geographical, linguistic and ethnic stereotyping that clubs together these often misconstrued, misjudged and misunderstood eight states — … in the northeastern geographical periphery of the Indian union … The northeastern region, which accounts for 7.8 per cent of the total land space of the country, is different from the rest of India in almost every way — be it in terms of culture, tradition, language and ethnicity or of history, physicality, cuisine, dress and indeed, the very cosmology and ethos of life of the people here. This diversity is further reflected within the region itself — each state, and indeed, even each small region within the states, has
its own distinct tradition, lore, music, myths, language and even cuisine, though separated by only a few kilometers in physical terms.

(Zama 2004: 7-8)

Since the eight states of the region hugely differ from each other in tradition, culture, language, and religion, it might seem to be an injustice to homogenize literatures from this region. But in spite of this diversity, it is possible to locate some common grounds, some shared values and concerns of these writers. Identity crisis, a sense of alienation is some of the dominant features of contemporary politics in the Northeast. Racial autonomy, cultural and linguistic conflicts and the problem of insurgency have been ravaging the region. These are some of the recurrent themes in these writers that bind them in one single thread. Besides issues like identity crisis, search for roots, self-assertion, or claims for a political space, it is the ecology of the region, and an ecological concern that predominantly seem to unite these multi-ethnic writers in a common platform. The works of the writers in English from India’s Northeast have many different aspects of the entire ecosystem of the region. The writers celebrate the ecological glory of Northeast with a keen ecological awareness. Although ethnicity is their chief concern as they hail from various ethnic groups, mountains, hills, valleys, people, myths legends, tribal rites, mystic as well aesthetic sensibilities, communal violence, insurgency are also some of the dominant and recurring themes in their works. They seem to use ecology, in a conscious way, as a tool for acquiring an identity - an identity which is unique, legitimate and a powerful one. It is felt that the unique ecology of the region has been pivotal in shaping an aesthetic sensibility of these writers.
Mamang Dai, Yumlams Tana (Arunachal Pradesh), Navakanta Baruah, Nilamani Phookan, Hiren Bhattacharya, Harekrishna Deka, Bhupati Das, Lakshahira Das, Dayananda Pathak, Umakanta Sarma, Rupanjali Baruah (Assam), Robin S Ngangom, R. K. Madhubir, R. K. Bhubonsana, Kunjarani Longjam Chanu, Yumlembam Ibomcha, Thangjam Ibopishak, Raghu Leishangthem, Arambam Ongbi Memchoubi, Saratchand Thiyam, Ilabanta Yumnam, Gambhini Devi (Manipur), Kynpham Sing Nongkynrih, Desmond L Kharmawphlang, Tarun Bhartiya, Pijush Dhar, Ananya S Guha, Anjum Hasan, Paul Lyngdoh, Donboklang Rynthathiang, Almond D Syiem, Esther Siyem, Bevan L Swer, Indari Siyem Warjri ((Meghalaya), Mona Zote, Cherrie L Chhangte, Lalrinmawii Khiangte, L. Biakliana, H. Ramdinthari, (Mizoram), Temsula Ao, Monalisa Changkija, Easterine Iralu, Nini Lunglelang (Nagaland), Rajendra Bhandari, Guru T. Ladakhi (Sikkim), Bhaskar Roy Barman, Niranjan Chakma, Jogamaya Chakma, Bijoy Kumar Debbarma, Narendra Debbarma, Nandakumar Debbarma, Kalyanbrata Chakraborti, Krittibas Chakraborty, Swapan Sengupta, Sudhanya Tripura, Sefali Debbarma, Chandra Kanta Murasingh, Pijush Routh and Gambhini Sorokkhaibam (Tripura) are some of the representative poets whose work have been enriching the multi-ethnic Indian Poetry in English from Northeast either in original writing or through translations.

Among the major prose writers, whose writings evoke myriad views of ecology and its interventions in contemporary cultural life are Mamang Dai, Yeshe Dorji Thongchi (Arunachal Pradesh), Birendra Kumar Bhattacharya, Hem Barua, Indira Goswami, Arup Kumar Dutta, Mitra Phukan, Sanjoy Hazarika, Dhruba Hazarika, Arupa Patangia Kalita, Sanjib Baruah (Assam), Arabam Ongbi Memchoubi, Thingnam Kishan Singh, Tayenjam Bijoykumar Singh, Pradip
Panjoubam, Yumlembam Ibomcha (Manipur), Patricia Mukhim, Siddartha Deb, Anjum Hasan (Meghalaya), Margaret Chalthantluangi Zama, Margaret Lalmuanpuii Pachuau, Mona Zote (Mizoram), Temsula Ao, Easterine Iralu, Charles Chasie, Anungla Aier (Nagaland).

The plays of Ratan Thiyam, G. C. Tongbra, Athokpam Tomchau, Arambam Somorendra, Wairokpam Kamni Singh (Manipur), Ganesh Gogoi and Arun Sarma (Assam), which are translated into English have profusely exposed a canonical writing with ecological themes. The basic Indian ethos teaches to be compassionate to nature and to live in harmony with it. In Indian culture there has been a tradition of living with nature in a relationship of mutual dependence. The people of Northeast India too feel an affinity with nature; they believe in a harmonious relationship with nature. The unique ecosystem of the region plays a pivotal role in shaping such a mindset of the people.

Writing in English from Northeast, although has attained a remarkable stature, seems to be deprived of proper critical attention in the national level. In the histories of Indian literature in English written by K. R. S. Iyengar and M. K. Naik, the works of the writers of this region have not been mentioned. K. R. S. Iyengar mentions only Praphulladutta Goswami’s *Bihu Songs of Assam* (Iyengar 1987: 642). M. K. Naik in his *A History of Indian English Literature* (1982) makes no mention of any work by a writer from Northeast India. Another book by him (with Shyamala A. Narayan) entitled *Indian English Literature: 1980-2000* (2001) mentions only two writers from India’s Northeast. The present work intends to critically examine writing in English...
from this region and to make an attempt to determine the position of the writers in the sphere of Indian Writing in English and their canon of ecopolitics. It is felt that the unique ecology of the region has been pivotal in shaping the aesthetic sensibilities of these writers. So it is hoped that studying their writing from an ecological perspective may even help in understanding this colourful, mesmerizing land called the Northeast India—a land, which is a great geographical as well as a psychological entity.

The work tries to examine the aspects of ecopolitics entailing ecomysticism, ecofeminism and the like in the works of select writers, who in my opinion, are said to be representative among those writers who write in English, or whose works have been translated into English. From an apparent reading it seems that varied aspects of ecopolitics are available in the works of these writers. The work makes an attempt to study the extent of availability and the validity thereof. This is mainly a text-based reading along with the use of the tenets of ecopolitics, ecomysticism and ecofeminism.

**ASPECTS OF ECOPOLITICS**

1

*Ecology and Ecocriticism*

**Ecology:**

Ecology is the scientific study of the relationship and interdependence between each and every life form of the environment. The word ‘Ecology’ has been
derived from the Greek words *oikos* and *logos* meaning ‘household’ and ‘knowledge’ respectively. The term ‘Ecology’ was coined by the German biologist Ernst Haeckel in 1866, when he defined it as the science of the relationship of the organisms to the environment. It has developed as a reaction against the practice of isolating creatures and studying them in laboratories. Ecology, in its present connotation, is an umbrella term that absorbs in it “Linnean taxonomy, quantified Darwinian evolution, and revolutionized Mendelian genetics, creating what amounts to a vernacular and democratic science. Open to the common, everyday discourse of species, ecology ranged freely across many fields, dipping into evolution, behavior, and physiology…” (Howarth1996:73).

Ecological thinking has been there for a long time, but ecology as a principle has developed gradually. The word ‘Ecology’ is very often used in connection with the ‘green’ movement. There are a number of philosophical concepts based on ecological principles. “These philosophies use the word ‘ecology’ in a much looser sense than the scientific. This practice—somewhere between seeing culture as manifestation of ecology and using ecology as metaphor for culture—is common in ecocriticism” (Kerridge 2006: 536). A look into some of the ecological philosophies brings to light this ecology-culture relationship.

**Deep Ecology:**

Emerging from the sense of a global ecological crisis Deep Ecology calls for a profound transformation in the traditional ecological paradigm entailing new
metaphysical, epistemological, religious, psychological, sociopolitical and ethical principles. “It calls for a new ontology (science of being), a new epistemology (way of knowing), a new psychology (idea of self), and a new metaphysics (assumptions about the world)” (Merchant 2005: 92). The basic tenet of Deep Ecology advocates the same right for the living environment as enjoyed by humanity to live, grow, flourish and develop. As a part of the intricate web of the entire ecosystem, the development of humanity is possible only through a peaceful co-existence with each and every organism. Such self-realization in the individual level would provide an ecocentric perspective to human activities. This helps in expanding the human self where the gap between the ‘self’ and the ‘other’ decreases. Deep Ecology opposes the anthropocentric idea of ‘development’ at the cost of environmental degradation. Such developments have already posed a great threat to the ecology of our planet. To present a critique of the anthropocentric concept of development, which is primarily a European concept, Deep Ecologists refer to the spiritual and philosophical values imbibed in the Native American, Buddhist, Jain or Hindu traditions. Arne Naess, the Norwegian philosopher, who is said to be the pioneer of this movement, presenting a critique of the Judeo-Christian tradition opines: “The arrogance of stewardship consists in the idea of superiority which underlines the thought that we exist to watch over nature like a highly respected middleman between the Creator and Creation” (Naess1989:187). Deep Ecological standpoint does not approve such a position.

Deep Ecology opposes the attitude of human beings of treating the earth as a resource to be exploited for their welfare and so called development. As human beings are just a part of the ecological web like any other creature, and not masters, they cannot claim superiority to any other object in the ecosystem. Instead, it is
always the system that is superior, greater and of more importance. So it is necessary
to honour, preserve and maintain the system for a holistic development. This
responsibility primarily lies on human beings. Deep Ecology advocates for such an
ecosophy, with the knowledge of which human beings can shoulder their
responsibility in this regard.

Proponents of Deep Ecology offer an eight-tier platform to elucidate the
fundamental principles of this philosophy. They are:

- The well-being and flourishing of human and non-human life on earth have intrinsic
  values in themselves. These values are interdependent of the usefulness of the non-
  human world for human purposes.
- Richness and diversity of life-forms contribute to the realization of these values and
  are also values in themselves.
- Humans have no right to reduce this richness and diversity except to satisfy vital
  human needs.
- The flourishing of human life and culture is compatible with a substantial decrease of
  the human population. The flourishing of non-human life requires such a decrease.
- Present human interference with the non-human world is excessive, and the situation
  is rapidly worsening.
- Policies must therefore be changed. These policies affect basic economic,
technological, and ideological structures. The resulting state of affairs will be deeply
different from the present.
- The ideological change is mainly that of appreciating life quality rather than adhering
to an increasingly higher standard of living. There will be a profound awareness of
the difference between big and great.
Those who subscribe to the foregoing points have an obligation directly or indirectly to try to implement the necessary changes. (Devall & Sessions 1985:70)

Apart from these, Arne Naess has set the following principles for Deep Ecology:

1. Rejection of the man-in-environment image in favour of the relational, total-field image.
2. Biospherical egalitarianism.
3. Principles of diversity and of symbiosis.
4. Anti-class posture.
5. Fight against pollution and resource depletion.
6. Complexity, not complication.
7. Local autonomy and decentralization. (ibidem 92)

The first principle views humans as an entity in relation to nature, and not above it. It draws a metaphysics of humans and nature in a relationship like cosmic/ ecological, I/thou, or person/planet. It calls for a democratic set up where everything in the ecological web has equal importance. The second principle calls for a close partnership among all forms of life. It envisages an ecocentric earth rather than an anthropocentric one where everything has equal rights, where everyone lives and let others live. The third principle speaks of diversity and symbiosis. Diversity brings new modes of life and it is through symbiosis co-existence and co-operation is possible. This principle offers a holistic worldview and sets a new ecological paradigm where the intrinsic value and beauty of all beings are recognized. Anti-class posture, the fourth principle, speaks of the exploitation and suppression of some groups by some other groups of the society. This exploitation and suppression have
adverse effects on both the groups as they both live in the same society and in a broader sense, are parts of the same system. While fighting against pollution and resource depletion, the fifth principle of this movement, sometimes seems to have a stand which is detrimental to their purpose. In focusing more on the issues of pollution and resource depletion, there is a chance of increasing class differences. Therefore, awareness is very much necessary. The sixth principle favours division of labour. To think of the whole ecosystem is, without any doubt, a complex idea in itself. To understand, observe and analyze this complexity a newer and deeper sensitivity is required. The seventh principle speaks of decentralization of power in order to obtain an ecological equilibrium. Local autonomy can reduce the amount of energy consumption.

Ramchandra Guha speaks of four tenets of Deep Ecology. First, Deep Ecology argues that the environmental movement must shift from an anthropocentric to a biocentric perspective. Secondly, it focuses on the preservation of wilderness; thirdly, it has a universal significance as it was practiced also in the ancient non-Western spiritual traditions, and the fourth tenet sees itself as the spiritual, philosophical and political vanguard of world environmentalism. (Guha1994:282)

**Shallow Ecology:**

Shallow Ecology fights against pollution and resource depletion. Its central concern is the health and affluence of the people in the developed countries. The Shallow Ecology movement tends to talk only about resources for humans, whereas
Deep Ecology talks about resources for each species. Practitioners of Shallow Ecology look at the narrower problems of population growth, environmental pollution, and resource depletion from the viewpoint of science and human affairs. Such views may seem to be limited as the basis of such views is anthropocentric assumptions that seem to fail to infuse nature with an intrinsic value of its own. Moreover, as it sees the entity of the natural world to exist mainly to serve the material needs of human species; it seems to fail in providing a framework for the sustainable future of all life on earth.

It advocates preservation of environment for the benefit of people, especially the people of the developed countries. Unlike Deep Ecology it places human beings at the centre of any ecological discourse and hence it puts utmost importance on their wellbeing. Shallow Ecology believes that saving the world is necessary only because of the reason that it sustains human life. Any object in the ecosystem is to be preserved only if it is of obvious value to humans. For example, preservation of wilderness is necessary as it is a resource for the human world, or the rainforests are to be preserved as they provide much needed oxygen to human beings. Considering these notions it seems that Shallow Ecology is self-centered in comparison to Deep Ecology and can be labeled as anthropocentric.

**Social Ecology:**

Social Ecology is the science that deals with the social and natural relationship in an ecosystem. As said by E. A. Gutkind, “The goal of Social Ecology is wholeness
and not mere adding together of innumerable details collected at random and interpreted subjectively and insufficiently” (Bookchin 1994: 155-156). It focuses on the relations of production and the hegemony of the state in reproducing those relations. It has primarily an anthropocentric ethic which is modified by ecological and dialectical science. It envisages a world in which the fundamental human needs are fulfilled through an environmentally sustainable economic restructuring. It advocates a science with social values. It seeks a total transformation on the economic basis. It supports an ecologically-based development policy that uses resources in a sustainable way.

Developed by Murray Bookchin in the 1960s this philosophy holds the view that the present ecological crisis originates from the hierarchical political and social systems which is essentially dominating in nature. So, without dealing with the problems within the society it is impossible to even realize the present ecological crisis, not to speak about its solution. Social Ecology argues that it should be kept in mind that the present ecological crisis is not only due to natural calamities, and catastrophes created by human beings, but also has other important aspects like political, economic, social, cultural, ethnic or gender conflicts.

In the framework of Social Ecology “the very notion of the domination of nature by man stems from the very real domination of human by human” (Bookchin2005:65). This pace of this domination, which is the product of the society, accelerates under capitalism. In the words of Bookchin:
The notion that man must dominate nature emerges directly from the domination of man by man…but it was not until organic community relation…dissolved into market relationships that the planet itself was reduced to a resource for exploitation. This centuries-long tendency finds its most exacerbating development in modern capitalism. Owing to its inherently competitive nature, bourgeois society not only pits humans against each other, it also pits the mass of humanity against the natural world. Just as men are converted into commodities, so every aspect of nature is converted into a commodity, a resource to be manufactured and merchandised wantonly…The plundering of the human spirit by the market place is paralleled by the plundering of the earth by capital. (ibidem 24-25)

**Socialist Ecology:**

Socialist Ecology is an ideology emerging from the doctrines of Marxism, Socialism, Green Politics, Ecology and alter-globalization. It holds that globalization works for the expansion of capitalism that builds a repressive social structure. In such a repressive social structure ‘power’ is a keyword that pervades from the centre to the periphery in a hierarchical order. This power-politics works as a catalectic force also for ecological degradation. Hence, Socialist Ecologists advocate dismantling of capitalism, or any power-centre for that matter, in order to prevent ecological degeneration. Instead, it emphasizes on common ownership of the means of production rather than the ownership of the State. It envisions a transition to a post-Capitalist society. Arguing that environment and ecology are key issues, this movement encourages an analysis of the dialectics between economy and ecology,
and between nature and history, and it believes in reconstruction of ecological socialism.

**Radical Ecology:**

Radical Ecology emerges from human beings’ profound sense of crisis in the urbanized world. It puts domination of nature and domination of human beings in the name of race, sex, class, etc. in an equal level. It empowers people to make changes for a new ecological ethic. It can be termed as the cutting edge of social ecology. “It pushes social and ecological systems toward new patterns of production, reproduction and consciousness that will improve the quality of human life and the natural environment. It challenges those aspects of the political and economic order that prevent the fulfillment of basic human needs. It offers theories that explain the social causes of environmental problems and alternative ways to resolve them. It supports social movements for removing the causes of environmental deterioration and raising the quality of life for people of every race, class and sex.” (Merchant 2005: 2)

**Human Ecology:**

Human Ecology puts deep insights in the interactions between people and the environment. It is the study of the relationship between human and all natural objects as they are intimately connected in a web of interactions. It explores the influence of humans on their environment and vice-versa. It has been a sociological discipline for more than half a century. Focusing on the inter-relation of human beings with their physical space, it also attempts to make systematic studies of the nature of all human
behaviour. As a theory, Human Ecology is based on the premise that human population has to negotiate and share space with other species in order to maintain the ecological equilibrium.

It is an interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary study of the relationship between humans and their environment. Recent developments in Human Ecology tend to relocate disciplinary boundaries crossing and even transcending these boundaries. This shift has redefined this philosophy adding new dimensions to the discourse. Recent scholarship on this branch of study tends to move towards a pluralism where Human Ecology becomes an umbrella term covering multi-disciplinary activities.

On the theoretical level Human Ecology tries to bridge the increasing gap between human beings and nature. It is of the belief that the behavioural pattern of an individual is influenced not only by the external environment but also by his/her intrinsic values and goals. Different communities, cultures and societies build up their distinctive sets of values and goals in relation to nature. This interaction plays a pivotal part in the entire ecology as both human beings and nature are intricate parts of the ecosystem. Human Ecology studies this interactive and inter-dependant relationship. It studies and analyzes the influence of humans on the environment on the one hand, and the influence of environment on human behaviour on the other, for a better understanding of the ecosystem.
**Spiritual Ecology:**

Spiritual Ecology is a term that refers to the interaction and inter-relation between religion, spirituality and environment. It tries to provide a spiritual dimension to the present ecological crisis. This ecological crisis is posing a great threat for the future of our planet. This is not just an environmental problem that is taking place in the outer physical world, but also indicates towards a deeper, inner crisis of the human soul. Spiritual Ecology is primarily concerned with this very spiritual crisis. It emphasizes on the importance of prayer and meditation. Prayer is the medium through which human beings meet the Divine. Meditation is a silent way of talking to one’s own self and thus to feel oneness and affinity with the whole of creation. This sense of oneness would inspire the human world to honour the sacred in creation. This consciousness of considering the human soul as a part of the *anima mundi*, the soul of the world is the need of the hour in order to address the present ecological crisis. Honouring and worshipping nature is an age-old practice in human civilization irrespective of class, creed and community. The traditional Indian doctrine of *Vashudhaiva Kutumbakama*, for example, which literally means that all of creation is one family, is the manifestation of the ‘Great Chain of Being’, of the realization that each and every object of nature is a part of the intricate web. The major aspects of Spiritual ecology have been highlighted in section analyzing ecomysticism in this study.

But there has been a tremendous change in human beings’ attitude towards nature. Nature has been objectified, mastered over and has been degraded to the level of a mere commodity. And thus explored, exploited and degraded. Spiritual Ecology
advocates the restoration of the age-old values of honouring the ecosystem so that instead of domination of nature by human beings both of them co-exist peacefully and with perfect harmony.

**Rational Ecology:**

Rational Ecology is the theoretical framework of ecological rationality that emphasizes on the role of human beings’ rationality in preserving the environment and maintaining ecological sustainability. Ecological rationality ascertains “the capability of ecosystems consistently and effectively to provide the good of human life support.” (Dryzek 1987:36)

Human being, who is a part of the ecosystem and who has a self-proclaimed assertion of being rational animals, must shoulder the responsibility of maintaining a sustainable ecology. It has framed for itself different values necessary for a meaningful living. In the history of human civilization economic, social, cultural, political, or legal values of human beings have been playing a pivotal role in bettering and uplifting the standard of human life. These values are always dependent upon the ecosystem as it supports and sustains human life and its very existence. So, ecological rationality should be given the topmost priority while framing any value for the human world. But Rational Ecologists believe that this is where human beings have failed miserably. They have failed to develop an ecological rationality yet.
According to the principles of Rational Ecology, human beings are to find out a mechanism to preserve the ecosystem, and it is their rationality that would determine the nature and scope of this mechanism. There have been a number of social choices as adopted by human civilization for its survival. But Rational Ecologists are of the opinion that these social choices have their limitations in attaining ecological rationality. John S. Dryzek finds out nine forms of social choices those have been adopted by human civilization. They are:

i) Markets, which co-ordinate their actors through “price signals”.

ii) Administered systems, which co-ordinate through commands.

iii) Legal system, which co-ordinate through formal rules and laws.

iv) Systems of moral persuasion, which co-ordinate through values.

v) Polyarchic systems, which co-ordinate through partisan mutual adjustments.

vi) Systems involving bargaining, which co-ordinate through formal negotiation.

vii) Systems involving armed conflict, which co-ordinate through force.

viii) Systems involving radical decentralization, which co-ordinate through cordial cooperation.

ix) Systems involving practical reason, which co-ordinate through discussion.

(ibidem 64)

The first seven choices, according to Dryzek, cannot promote ecological rationality. It shows that our existing systems are rather poorly equipped from the viewpoint of Rational Ecology. Dryzek suggests that the last two in the above list can be used as primary tools for attaining ecological rationality.
Ecocriticism

The term ‘ecocriticism’ is said to be used for the first time by US critic William Rueckert in his essay “Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism” in 1978. Also known as ecopoetics, environmental literary criticism, or green cultural studies, Ecocriticism or ecological criticism “is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment.” (Glotfelty and Fromm 1996: xviii). It is based on the connection between human culture and the entire ecosphere. It is “an avowedly political mode of analysis…. is closely related to environmentally oriented developments in philosophy and political theory.” (Garrard 2007: 3). It assures that ‘nature’ is a cultural as well as a political construct and seeks to consider place, like race, class and gender, a critical category for evaluating a literary text — to observe in a text the ‘place’ of nature and the ‘nature’ of place.

The idea of ‘nature’ is a key concept in any ecocritical discourse. The politics of representing ‘nature’ in literature is a necessary study. Because of this politics of representing nature, the romantic ideology of ‘worshiping’ nature may even seem as a cover for the continued exploitation of nature. Therefore, in ecological discourse nature has multi-dimensional roles with multiple voices. Kate Soper speaks of three ideas of nature as conceived by the human world — the ‘metaphysical’, the ‘realist’ and the ‘lay’ or ‘surface’. She goes on defining these ideas and says that while talking about nature, the Green Movements most commonly conceive the ‘lay’ or ‘surface’ idea of nature. (Soper 2004:125). Ecocriticism, says Jay Parini, “marks a return to activism and social responsibility; it also signals a dismissal of theory’s more solipsistic tendencies. From a literary aspect, it marks a re-engagement with realism,
with the actual universe of rocks, trees and rivers that lies behind the wilderness of signs” (Parini1995:52). Simon Estok argues that Ecocriticism is more than “simply the study of Nature or natural things in literature; rather, it is any theory that is committed to effecting change by analyzing the function — thematic, artistic, social, historical, ideological, theoretical, or otherwise — of the natural environment, or aspects of it, represented in documents (literary or other) that contribute to material practices in material worlds.” (Estok 2005:21)

Taking an earth-centered approach to literary studies ecocriticism is based on the fundamental premise that human culture is connected to the physical world having a strong and meaningful interaction between them. This interaction is the basic subject of study in ecocriticism. Another notable feature of ecocriticism is that it expands the notion of ‘the world’ including in it the entire ecosphere unlike most of other literary where ‘the world’ has a limited sense standing only for the social sphere.

The premise of ecocriticism is motivated with an awareness that the actions of human civilization has brought the environment of the planet to a point of no return, where there is a constant threat of an ecocide. Ecocriticism also tries to create an awareness to be proactive in preserving the environment and thus preventing the global catastrophe. Human beings’ ignorance as well as lack of awareness is very much responsible for the present crisis of environmental degradation. The following observation by Donald Worster, an environmental historian bears significance:
We are facing a global crisis today, not because of how ecosystems function but rather because of how our ethical systems function. Getting through the crisis requires understanding our impact on nature as precisely as possible, but even more, it requires understanding those ethical systems and using that understanding to reform them. (Worster1993:27)

Feminist criticism has been a major influence in the growth and development of ecocriticism. Feminist theorist Elaine Showalter shows three stages in the development of feminist criticism (Showalter1985:10-12). According to Cheryll Glotfelty these three stages “provide a useful scheme for describing three analogous phases in ecocriticism” (Glotfelty1996: xvii). The first stage in feminist criticism, as shown by Showalter, is the “image of women” stage. It is concerned with the representation of women in canonical literature. Similarly, the first stage of ecocriticism studies the representation of nature. The second stage of feminist criticism deals with the function of consciousness where literature is rediscovered, reissued, reconsidered and restudied. Likewise, the second stage of ecocriticism is a kind of a re-evaluation, where a given literary text is restudied in order to find out the place of nature as well as the nature of place in it. The third stage of feminist criticism, as identified by Showalter, is the theoretical phase; and in ecocriticism also the third stage tries to theorize different power-relations in terms race, ethnicity, gender etc.

Ecocriticism, as viewed by Greg Garrard, is

an avowedly political mode of analysis, as the comparison with feminism and Marxism suggests. Ecocritics generally tie their cultural analyses explicitly to a
‘green’ moral and political agenda. In this respect, ecocriticism is closely related to environmentally oriented developments in philosophy and political theory. Developing the insights of earlier critical movements, ecofeminists, social ecologists and environmental justice advocates seek a synthesis of environmental and social concerns. (Garrard 2007: 3)

The basic tenets of Ecocriticism may be identified as follows:

- Green Cultural Studies: Inter-dependence of Nature and culture
- Ethical component of literature: Recycling of old moral and mythological stories into new one
- Ethical wholeness and living places
- Household, family and community (Oikos and Habitats)
- Life and death, time and change, pattern and rhythm
- People, Nature and versions of Pastoral
- The city as Second Nature
- Local and Global
- Nation states and international relations
- Ecofeminism
- Hyperreality [Das, N. 2007:19-23].

Recent developments in the field of ecocriticism show that it is not at all an ‘interdisciplinary study’, or it is not merely a study on ‘nature writing’, but it is an essential component of literary studies. Joseph Meeker in his seminal book *The Comedy of Survival: Studies in Literary Ecology*, the book that in a sense pioneered the study of literature from an ecological viewpoint, says:
Human beings are the earth’s only literary creatures… if the creation of literature is an important characteristic of the human species, it should be examined carefully and honestly to discover its influence upon human behavior and the natural environment—to determine what role, if any, it plays in the welfare and survival of mankind and what insight it offers into human relationships with other species and with the world around us. (Meeker 1974: 3-4)

II

Ecomysticism

Ecomysticism may be defined as ecological mysticism or living ecologically like a mystic’s way of life. Mysticism “is the art and science of living perfectly; it is the self-knowledge that subsumes the knowledge of the world. It is the quest for and the union with the absolute” (Paranjape1989: 1). Further, “it is the concern with the nature of the ultimate reality. It includes both means and ends, both the goal and the way” (ibidem). The major terms in the aforesaid definition like “Absolute”, “ultimate reality” are the parts of the cosmos/ecology. So ecological mysticism implies the art/science of living perfectly ecologically and earning the self-knowledge required for the said purpose. The spiritual ecology/creation spirituality is same as Ecomysticism.
Ecomysticism/Spiritual ecology has four aspects or it is of four types like: *Via Positiva, Via Negativa, Via Creativa* and *Via Transformativa*. *Via Positiva* is the experience of the Divine in terms of delight, awe, and wonder at being present in the world; it involves the institution that creation is a blessing, and response of gratitude. *Via Negativa* is the experience of the darkness, deprivation, suffering, and pain. These two kinds of experiences lead to a rebirth of creativity and it is the *Via Creativa* that involves identifying new ecological virtues for living such as vegetarianism, recycling, relearning the sacredness of nature, redefining creation through political action, and making new rituals to celebrate sacred places, times, and being in nature. *Via Transformativa* is the transformation to a more compassionate society in which all beings love one another. (Fox 1998:228).

The concept of Ecomysticism has been there since ancient times. A strong awareness of it emerged during the twentieth century as a result of human beings’ profound sense of crisis in the environment. Since time immemorial human civilization has been in deep attachment with nature. It has been worshipping and nurturing nature and has been living with inter-dependence. But due to the increase of human population, industrialization and rapid urbanization there seems to arise some loop-holes in this age-old bond. In order to meet the challenges posed by these modern phenomena human beings started to exploit and dominate nature. Spiritual Ecology opposes this very concept of dominance. It attempts to develop among human beings a sense of reverence and love for nature. An ethical sense enables human beings to feel an empathy with nature, to observe closely the mysteries behind it and thus to preserve it for mutual benefit. The performance of the traditional rites and rituals of human society with regard to nature is one of the major concerns of
Spiritual ecology. These rituals may not be substitutes for any social action to preserve nature, but the Spiritual ecologists believe that these can create awareness and can prepare the people for social activities in that direction. Carl Von Essen opines, “A vision evolved that our spiritual bond with the natural world can be a potent path of action toward environmental healing.” (Essen 2010: 1)

The Council of All Beings was developed by Joanna Macy, John Seed and others in Australia to propagate the concept of Spiritual Ecology. The present generation of human beings is very much concerned of two major threats to our planet: the possibility of a nuclear holocaust and the ecological crisis. The Council of All Beings framed a 5-point spiritual response to these concerns. They are:

1. Feelings of pain for our world are natural and healthy.
2. This pain is morbid only if denied.
3. Information alone is not enough.
4. Unblocking repressed feelings release energy and clear the mind.
5. Unblocking our pain for the world reconnects us with the larger web of life. (Merchant 2005:119)

Creation Spirituality is a way of living with nature where there is partnership and reverence instead of exploitation and dominance. It is a concept that unifies body and spirit, arts and science; that inspires people, irrespective of class, caste, creed, community, religion, race and sex, to see themselves in terms of the entire cosmology; that emphasizes on ecocentrism instead of anthropocentrism. Matthew Fox, founder
of the University of Creation Spirituality in California, and one of the pioneers of this ecological concept, speaks of some of the major principles of Creation Spirituality:

1. The universe is basically a blessing, that is, something we experience as good.
2. We can and do relate to the universe as a whole since we are a microcosm of that macrocosm and that this relationship intoxicates us.
3. Everyone is a mystic. (Fox 1998: 229)

Imbibing these principles in one’s self one can feel an affinity with nature, can feel it as a part of the self. This widening of the self surely brings a radical change to human understanding. John Seed, Director, ‘Rainforest Information Centre’, Australia, while was asked how he felt in safeguarding the rainforests replied, “I try to remember that it’s not me, John Seed, trying to protect the rainforest. Rather I am part of the rainforest protecting myself. I am that part of the rainforest recently emerged into human thinking.” (Macy 1994: 294). This is undoubtedly a revolutionary change in human understanding. This is what can be termed as the greening of the self. This notion of the Green self can be seen in the ancient Indian scriptures. It can also be seen in the Chipko Movement in India where women protected the trees from cutting and thus falling down by embracing the trees feeling themselves as the trees. This consciousness of finding self in nature and nature in self is basically what Spiritual Ecology deals with.
Ecofeminism

Ecofeminism is one of the significant ecological and feminist movements emerged in the 1970s. An increasing consciousness of the relationship between women and nature primarily resulted in the advent of this movement. It draws a parallel between the domination of women and the domination of nature by the patriarchal society. Arising out of the struggle of women to sustain themselves, their families and their communities this movement advocates for environmental protection as well as protection of women, preservation of indigenous cultures, traditional values, sustainable development and other such issues that can bring a social change. It views that racism, classism, and sexism are interconnected and liberation of women cannot be fully achieved without the liberation of nature and vice versa. It begins with the assumption that cultural texts construct particular notions of ‘nature’, and, therefore, literary, visual and other representations of nature are reflections of an age’s views and treatment of nature. It links between literary studies and environmental discourse and observes the effects of such discourses on culture.

Francoise d’Eaubonne, a French woman, writing in the early 1970s, is often credited by many scholars for giving an intellectual and theoretical base to ecofeminism. But as an academic discourse it did not develop until the mid to late 1980s. The Japanese ecofeminist Natsuko Hagiwara defines ecofeminism as a “women’s resolution to create an ecological revolution for the subsistence of human
beings on this planet.” (Hagiwara 1997:46). This movement involves activism as well as ideology. The activism involved in this movement can be seen in various activities performed primarily by women around the world for preserving the environment and ecology. For example, women in the US protested the atrocities at Love Canal and analyzed the shock waves of the nuclear leak at Three Mile Island; there the housewives organized to clean up hazardous waste sites; in Kenya, women of the Green Belt movement banded together to plant millions of trees in arid degraded lands; in Canada, they took to the streets for a signature campaigning against uranium processing, and in India women initiated the Chipko Movement, where they hugged the trees to save them from getting cut and thus felling down.

There has been a systematic exploitation of nature as well as of women since the long past. Nature has been subordinated to ‘the master subject’ that is meant to be explored, exploited and used to the optimum extent. This can also be said about women who have been considered to be inferior to their male counterparts. In order to show this dualism regarding women and nature Val Plumwood presents a list of binary oppositions where the qualities on the left hand side are considered to be superior to those on the right hand side and are regarded to be essentially ‘masculine’. Plumwood says that the master identity depends on this dualistic structure of otherness and negation:

Culture / Nature

Mind / Body

Male / Female
Masculine / Feminine

Human / Animal

Reason / Emotion

Subject / Object

Public / Private

Adult / Child

Universal / Particular


Ecofeminism challenges these dualities and seeks to acknowledge value and honour women's biological particularity and affirms women as subjects and makers of history. This understanding is crucial in the transformation of feminism.

Feminist thinkers, theorists, critics and activists right from Simone de Beauvoir have argued that the allocation of women to the side of nature has been greatly due to their role in procreation. And it is essentially the female biology that determines her role in procreation. The female, as de Beauvoir puts it, is ‘more enslaved to the species than the male, her animality is more manifest’ (Beauvoir1972:239). This, according to her, is one of the primary reasons of devaluation and de-historization of female in regard to male or nature to culture. Through this naturalization women have been devalued and denied cultural participation.
The devaluation and denial of women in cultural participation at large have also resulted in the subordination and downgrading of nature due to its representation as ‘female’. Since the dawn of human civilization ‘mother nature’ has been explored for resources, tilled and sowed with seeds. Even various objects of nature such as trees, rivers, hills and streams are very often personified as female and compared to the parts of the female body. Thus “nature is allegorized as either a powerful maternal force, the womb of all human production, or as the site of sexual enticement and ultimate seduction. Nature is both the generative source, but also the potential spouse of science, to be wooed, won, and if necessary forced to submit to intercourse.” (Soper 2004: 14)

Ecofeminism believes that there is a deep-rooted connection between women and nature. This Nature-women connection can be seen from eight different levels — historical connection, conceptual connection, empirical/experimental connection, symbolic connection, political connection, philosophical connection, theoretical connection, and ontological connection. On the basis of these connections Ecofeminism is broadly divided into six types. They are: Liberal Ecofeminism, Cultural Ecofeminism, Social Ecofeminism, Socialist Ecofeminism, Radical Ecofeminism and Spiritual Ecofeminism. Although there are these different schools of ecofeminism having different ideals and principles, some fundamental points are common to all of them. They all share the common premise that there is a close connection between the domination of nature by humans and the oppression of women by men. All of them have the common goal of liberating both women and
nature, and to create a new society without any hierarchy or environmental destruction as such.

Liberal Ecofeminism:

Liberal Ecofeminism is concerned with the over use of natural resources in the name of development. It believes that women have the potential to conserve natural resources and maintain high quality of life. As argued by Simone de Beauvoir, women can and should transcend the notion regarding their biology, which is a social construct, in order to actively participate in environment conservation (Beauvoir 1972: 95-96). This movement was inspired by Simone de Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex* (1949) and Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique* (1963). According to Beauvoir’s argument, although men and women are biologically different, women can transcend their biology and can free themselves from their predicament of being treated as mere biological reproducers. Flourished mainly during the 1960s this movement fights for an equal status for women in the workplace as well as in the social, cultural, economic and the political sphere.

During that same period when Liberal feminism exploded, Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* (1962) was published. Considered as one of the seminal books those deal with environmental issues, *Silent Spring* greatly influenced the wave of liberal feminism giving it a direction to various environmental issues. A parallelism between women and nature in many planes were drawn and thus liberal ecofeminism gained a momentum.
Liberal ecofeminists believe that the large-scale plundering of nature in the name of so called development is one of the major causes of ecological degradation. Awareness as well as activism is of utmost importance in order to prevent this. Given equal opportunity in education and other social participations women can also contribute towards the improvement of the environment. Women should join men hand in hand in this important project even by transcending the social stigma of their biology. This is what the main point of contention of the Liberal Ecofeminist Movement. It plays a vital role in challenging the structure of the state and broadening the environmental agenda.

**Cultural Ecofeminism:**

Cultural ecofeminism, as defined by Judith Ress, concentrate on “the moral superiority of women over men and the values associated with women, such as compassion, nurturance, and peacemaking; it seeks to better society by stressing the contributions made by women.” (Ress 2006:76). It, like the other types of ecofeminisms, is based on the perception that women and nature are mutually associated. It is a response to the exploitation, domination and devaluation of women as well as nature by the patriarchal society. Technological development, which is considered by Cultural Ecofeminism to be essentially masculine, is responsible in degrading and ruthlessly exploiting the ‘feminine’ nature. Because of this standpoint Cultural Ecofeminism is often considered to be an anti-science, anti-technology movement. As Cultural Ecofeminism celebrates nature as a female entity, it tries to revive the ancient rituals of worshipping various goddesses and the female
reproductive system in order to develop a reverence for nature and for its preservation. Carolyn Merchant observes that Cultural Ecofeminism “look to earth-based spiritualities, premodern rituals, and the idea of living, nurturing earth taken from Renaissance organism in order to locate resources for their efforts to revalue women’s experience and to reestablish women’s connection with nature.” (Castree & Braun 2001:17).

**Social Ecofeminism:**

Social Ecofeminism seeks to restructure a decentralized society where there would be no specific power centers. “Social Ecofeminism accepts the basic tenet of social ecology that the idea of dominating nature stems from the domination of human by human. Only ending all systems of domination makes possible an ecological society, in which no states or capitalist economies attempt to subjugate nature, in which all aspects of human nature----- including sexuality and the passions as well as rationality----are freed.” (Biehl 1988: 7). Unlike Cultural Ecofeminism, which believes in goddess-worshipping and in the historical connection between women and nature and wishes to liberate the both, Social Ecofeminism begins with an analysis of early radical feminism that sought to break down the structure of domination and oppressions imposed upon women by society, religion, or the state through various methods like romantic love, marriage, family, capitalism etc. Instead, it advocates liberation of women through overturning economic and social hierarchies. Then only, it believes, women can participate in the activities of public domain without any domination or oppression as such. Social Ecofeminism although accepts the differences in male and female reproductive capacities, does not consider these
differences as the cause for gender hierarchies and oppression. It envisions a society where women would be liberated from all kinds of oppressions—reproductive, intellectual, sensual and moral, a society where both men and women would have an ecological ethic based on caring, sharing and mutual understanding.

**Socialist Ecofeminism:**

Socialist Ecofeminism centers on the traditional Marxist concepts of production and reproduction. It also, like Social Ecofeminism, considers capitalism and patriarchy as oppressive both to women and nature. It also advocates liberation of women through their participation in ecofeminist activities. It views nature as an active subject and not a passive object to be exploited, oppressed and dominated. There must be a transformation of human being’s social and ecological ethics in order to build a cordial relationship between human beings and nature, which can ascertain sustainable development for both of them. Socialist Ecofeminism raises some vital questions such as:

1. What is at stake for women and for nature when production in traditional societies is disrupted by colonial and capitalist development?
2. What is at stake for women and for nature when production in traditional methods and norms of biological reproduction are disrupted by interventionist technologies (such as chemical methods of birth control, sterilization, amniocentesis, rented wombs, and baby markets) and by chemical and nuclear pollutants in soil, water, and air (pesticides, herbicides, toxic chemicals, and nuclear radiation)?
3. What would an ecofeminist social transformation look like?

4. What forms might socialist societies take that would be healthy for all women and men and for nature? (Merchant 2005: 208)

During the process of production and reproduction human beings come into direct interaction with nature and thus disrupt or sustain the ecology. This direct interaction with nature should be a reminder to human beings of their responsibility towards nature. Socialist Ecofeminism seeks women to play a more active role in handling this responsibility as they are more involved in production and reproduction of life and have more direct interaction with ecology.

Socialist ecofeminism links the oppression of women and exploitation of nature to the patriarchal and capitalist system. It talks about a restructuring of society. Carolyn Merchant argues that Socialist ecofeminism is a critique of capitalist development where reproduction and ecology are subordinate to production. (Merchant 1990:105). It views both nature and gender as social as well as cultural constructs and opposes the conceptual dichotomies as masculine/feminine, mind/body, nature/culture etc. In short, the goal of Socialist ecofeminism is sustainable development, a harmonious relationship with nature without any domination whatsoever.

**Radical Ecofeminism:**

Radical Ecofeminism can be divided into two categories. According to the first category, women have a biological, spiritual and natural link with the non-human
world and hence are ‘closer to nature’ than men. The second category believes that women’s oppression is due to their biological role in reproduction and due to the social and cultural construct of sex or gender. Radical ecofeminists argue that the role of women is determined by the patriarchy either as mother, whose primary function is to bear and raise children or as objects of sex, who are to satisfy the sexual desire of men. Therefore, Radical ecofeminists are of the opinion that the liberation of both women and nature is possible only by dismantling the patriarchal archetypes and the male control over the earth as well as over the woman body. Like the Socialist ecofeminists, they also oppose such polemics of masculine/feminine, nature/culture, or production/reproduction, which, they believe, are mere socio-cultural constructs. Radical ecofeminism advocates an ethics of care, compassion, and co-existence with inter-dependence and mutual understanding. With such thought-provoking ideals Radical ecofeminism has placed itself as a fundamental movement in broadening the ecological agenda.

**Spiritual Ecofeminism:**

Spiritual ecofeminism seeks a link between the degradation of earth’s ecosystem and the commonly held Judeo-Christian belief that humans have the right and power to have domination over the earth given by none other than God Himself. Spiritual ecofeminists are of the opinion that the Judeo-Christian tradition sanctions subjugation of women as it encourages and sanctions subjugation of earth. So it is necessary for the Judeo-Christian religion to discard the idea of a male God, and if it cannot and do not do so, it is necessary to celebrate nature through the practice of “earth-based spiritualities” (Tong 2009:260). According to Starhawk, a renowned
Spiritual ecofeminist, the three most important concepts of earth-based spiritualities are the immanence of the Goddess in the living world, interconnection of mind, body and nature, and a compassionate life-style. (ibidem 261-263).

In her book entitled *Ecofeminist Philosophies: A Western Perspective on What it is and Why it Matters* (2000) ecofeminist philosopher Karren Warren provides an overview of the history and development of Spiritual ecofeminism. She opines that there is a general agreement among the Spiritual ecofeminists that “earth-based, feminist spiritualities and symbols (such as Gaia and Goddess) are essential to ecofeminism.” (Warren 2000: 31). According to Warren, the concept of Spiritual ecofeminism can be elaborated using three definitions:

1. Ecofeminist spiritualities are feminists: They express a commitment to the elimination of male gender privilege and power over women in their myth, rituals, symbols, language, and value-system.
2. Ecofeminist spiritualities are spiritualities: They express faith in a life-affirming (rather than life-denying) power or presence (energy, force, being, deity or deities, God or Goddess) other than and in addition to one’s own individual ego.
3. Ecofeminist spiritualities are ecofeminists: They express a two-fold commitment to challenge harmful women-other human-nature interconnections and to develop earth-respectful, care-sensitive practices toward humans and earth others. (ibidem 198).
Ecopolitics

Ecopolitics includes various aspects of ecology, biodiversity, ecomysticism, ecofeminism and ecosophy. Checking destruction and degeneration of ecology, mystifying its existence and providing its role in upholding the peace and prosperity of humanity are the subjects covered in Ecopolitics. Human beings are an integral part of the world. The planet we live in is full of wonder, mystery and exquisite beauty. It is the responsibility of human beings to maintain the unique ecology of our planet. But owing to various destructive practices by human beings in the name of development and technological advancement, the ecology of the earth is presently under a tremendous threat. The present ecological crisis is leading to political, economic, and social crisis for human civilization. Also known as Green Politics, it is playing a vital role in the global ecological scenario through various Green Movements. The ‘politics’ of these movements has been debated among environmentalists, activists and social thinkers worldwide. Some of these Green Movements associated with global environment protection are:

**The Group of Ten or the Big Ten:**

The Group of Ten or the Big Ten has traditionally focused on the legislative and the judicial process for raising environmental standards. Its ethic was homocentric with the maxim of “the greatest good, for the greatest number, for the longest time.” The Group of Ten includes the following organizations:
i) Environmental Defense Fund
ii) Environmental Policy Institute
iii) Friends of the Earth
iv) Izaak Walton League of America
v) National Audubon Society
vi) National Parks and Conservation Association
vii) National Wildlife Federation
viii) National Resources Defense Council
ix) Sierra Club
x) Wilderness Society

The Anti-Toxics Movement:

This movement was started in 1983 and published a newsletter entitled *Everyone's Backyard*. It is primarily a homocentric movement which also thinks about other species and the environment as well. It opposes toxic waste incinerators that increase acid rain forming gases and toxic ashes.

Environmental Justice Movement:

This movement took off in 1982 in North Carolina mainly by African-American and Native American people. It talks about the hazards of toxic waste pollution and affirmed the right of all workers to a safe and healthy work environment.
The Greens:

Australia’s United Tasmanian Group, formed in 1972, and New Zealand’s Values Party, formed in the same year, were the first political parties with green platforms to challenge established parliamentary systems. Then came the West German Greens emerged in the 1980s, the Italian Greens in 1984, the French Greens in the early 1980s, and the Green Party in Sweden was formed in 1981. The political platform of the Greens is based on four pillars:

1. Grassroots Democracy
2. Social Justice, and Equal Opportunity
3. Ecological Wisdom

Along with these four major pillars six additional principles are also there:

5. Decentralization
7. Feminism and Gender Equality
8. Respect for Diversity
9. Personal and Global Responsibility
10. Future Focus and Sustainability (Merchant 2005: 176)

With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989, the reunification of Germany, the rising importance of the European Union, and the creation of the European
Parliament the European political scenario has been radically reoriented. In 2004 the federated green parties of Europe united forces to form the European Green Party.

**Earth First!**

Founded by Dave Foreman in the early 1980s, Earth First! advocates strategic ecotage. Their motto is “no compromise in defense of Mother Earth”. It believes in the defense of wilderness.

**Greenpeace:**

Greenpeace takes on a variety of environment related issues using direct action and confrontation as strategies for change. Its issues range from nuclear-free seas to saving whales and seals, checking toxic wastes, saving Antarctica, etc. As an organization it was founded in 1971.

**Direct Action:**

Inspired by the Gandhian philosophy of non-violence the concept of civil disobedience, this movement was started in 1990 in San Francisco, although such activities of ecological preservation through non-violent ways were there even before.
The Gaia Movement:

This movement is named after Gaia, the Greek goddess of Earth. Its hypothesis states that “the physical and chemical condition of the surface of the earth, of the atmosphere, and of the oceans has been and is actively made fit and comfortable by the presence of life itself”.

The Chipko Movement:

This movement in India during the 70’s of the last century was largely participated by women. Women came to the forefront and transformed their own struggle into this movement. ‘Chipko’ literally means clinging. Men and women expressed their concern for trees by clinging them and not allowing the contractors to cut the trees for profit. This movement heralded many environmental as well as social movements in India. The slogan which became quite popular during the movement was: “The forest is our mother’s home. We will protect it with all our might”. (Kumar1993: 183).

The aforementioned discussion on ecological, ecomystic and ecofeminist principles will be used as the basic tools for analyzing the works of the chosen authors from various provinces of Northeast India. The Northeasterners are eco-conscious by nature from time immemorial. The travelers from abroad in various ages have appreciated the ecology of the region. Huen Tsang’s account of Kamrup is a strong proof of it and even the Western missionaries and travelers have made profuse appreciation of the ecological glory and mysteriousness of Northeast India.
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