CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

‘NATURE’ AND MAN

‘Nature’ writing is traceable in different forms across the world and across the ages. It appears as an inevitable part of human existence in folklore, religious scriptures, and in literature of different ages. But the role of ‘nature’ differs according to the individual perception of the author. A classic example is ‘nature’ appearing as the backdrop setting suitable for the emotional state of the protagonist in Hardy’s novels. There is celebration of the beauty of ‘nature’ in Wordsworth’s poetry, and in Thoreau it becomes the provider of salvation. Depiction of ‘nature’ changes according to cultures, religions, philosophies and ideologies. In fact, from antiquity ‘nature’ and ‘natural phenomena’ have been treated with respect and awe, though these feelings increased or decreased as per the demands of the times.

There is also an increasing interest in the spiritual nature of man and ironically though the corporate world now attaches importance to spiritual quotient of their employees. So much so that it makes one wonder whether the time has come for reconciling mind and matter, spirituality and materialism.

Most of the early spiritual writings portray strong connections between man and ‘nature’ or the need for that connection. ‘Nature’ is the focal point in many religious scriptures. But as the worldly motives of people increased, man alienated himself from his
religious and spiritual ideas and consequently from ‘nature.’ It happened so slowly and steadily that man was unaware of distancing himself from ‘nature.’ Spiritual ideas have been subjected to twisted interpretations and reinterpretations first for political reasons, and in recent times for materialistic ones. In contemporary times, ancient texts are reread to recapture the bond between man and ‘nature.’

Even from a scientific point of view, we are a product of ‘nature.’ If God did not make us then ‘nature’ did. Every living organism, every living plant have their origin from the primordial soup in which the first cell came into existence. Then, it somehow learnt to make a copy of itself. The process continued and multiplication proliferated into innumerable life forms. The homo sapiens alone among the species seem to have become conscious of their consciousness that has made all the difference. This was a blessing not without its flip side. While man could achieve progress and enlightenment on the one hand, his essential connections with what brought him into the world were severed on the other. But once the distractions subside and consciousness wakes up to roots or origins, man is assaulted by an incomprehensible nostalgia and a persistent longing to find ‘home.’

The Hindu mythology is one among the ancient examples of works that deal with the portrayal of beauty of ‘nature.’ Vedic literature focuses on the veneration of five elements, earth, wind, fire, water, and space/sky/ether. They are symbolically represented in the system of worship prevailing in the Hindu temples, and to these elemental forces are offered sandal, incense, lighted lamp, holy water and flower respectively.
The frugality that the Buddhist should follow is illustrated by a famous story of Ananda’s explanation to King Udena of the recycling of used clothes. When the old clothes are replaced by the new clothes, the old clothes shall be used as coverlets, the old coverlets as mattress covers, the mattress covers as rugs, old rugs as dusters, and the old dusters kneaded with clay shall be used to repair cracked floors and walls. There is also the teaching that a man should earn only what is needed by him like the bee which gathers only that much honey as required. The bee is careful not to harm the flower while taking honey. It takes exactly what is needed for its survival (Silva www.accesstoinsight.com). Both the parables underline the importance of a symbiotic relationship between ‘nature’ and man.

Swearer quotes Buddha: “seeking the supreme of sublime peace, I wandered …until…I saw a delightful forest. So I sat down thinking. Indeed, this is an appropriate place to strive for the ultimate realization of Nirvana” (19). Here, the beautiful forest is treated as the appropriate place to seek salvation. Swearer further says that Buddha’s vision of “dependant arising” is the chief idea behind the Buddhist ecological consciousness. “Dependant arising” or “on the arising of this that arises” in brief is the interdependency of the things in ‘nature’ (21). He says that Buddha’s sermons are rich with descriptions of compassion towards birds and animals. There are incidents in which they even form his audience. ‘The Buddha among the Birds’ is one among the Jataka Stories. Buddha even claims himself to have been a bird in his previous birth. Buddha chided man for his merciless treatment of trees, birds and animals.
All ascetic groups in India strictly follow any one of these traditions. The Buddhist monks are prohibited to walk outside after the rain as they may unknowingly step on to the small insects on the road. They are asked to filter the water before they drink to make sure they do not swallow any insects. The Buddhist monks should never injure a plant life unless for food. The monks derive joy and satisfaction from the beauty of ‘nature.’ They are detached from worldly matters. The association the monks have created for themselves with ‘nature’ is lucidly illustrated in the writing of the Buddhist monk, Mahakassapa, in one of their scriptures *Theragatha*:

Those upland glades delightful to the soul,

Where the Kaveri spreads its wildering wreaths,

Where sound the trumpet-calls of elephants:

Those are the hills where my soul delights….

The human soul is felt or realized only in a blissful harmony with ‘nature.’ Other major mainstream religious philosophies that teach respect towards ‘nature’ are Jainism, Confucianism, Taoism, and Shintoism. These philosophies have flourished in their respective cultures throughout the ages helping man to live in harmony with the entire cosmos.

Other than religious scriptures, there are literatures from the ancient time that have focused on the importance of ‘nature.’ The pastoral form of writing is one such tradition. Gerrard discusses the study by Terry Gifford of the three divisions of the pastoral. The first originates in Alexandria and “becomes a key poetic form in Europe
during Renaissance” (33). The second is any literature that distinctly portrays the beauty of romantic living, and is called the Romantic pastoral. The third is somewhat negative in outlook as it portrays the beauty of rural life at the same time hiding the hardships behind it. This division of the pastoral includes literature which depicts rural beauty in contrast to the urbanized world. The first one or the classical pastoral belongs to the Hellenistic period (B.C. 316-260). According to Gerrard, though the classical pastoral contains many anthropocentric ideas it was more a reaction against the large scale urbanization during that age. He also highlights Virgil’s writings that dwell on deforestation prevalent in Rome in his time. Gerrard cites the line “or gladness even the unshorn mountains fling their voices towards the stars” (36) as an example.

Virgil is seen by Gerrard as the “progenitor of later pastoral poetry (36).” Virgil is then connected to Leo Marx and his work The Machine in the Garden (1964), which deals with the pastoral in American Literature. Gerrard divides pastoral literature in terms of its temporal implication, namely elegy, idyll, and utopia. While the pastoral elegy implies the nostalgic view of the ancient beautiful landscapes that are lost forever, the pastoral idyll denotes the abundance of ‘nature’ and its resources, and pastoral utopia explicates a longing for a ‘redeemed future.’ Man’s fall in Genesis is exemplified for the elegiac use of the pastoral, for it deals with the “lost pastoral bounty and innocence” (37).

Gerrard’s account of the pastoral gives us a working perspective demonstrating that certain impulses and emotional correspondences have characterized the relationship between man and ‘nature.’ While environmental thinking with romantic outlook
arrives in English literature with Coleridge and Wordsworth, it does so in America with the advent of transcendentalism. The transcendentalist view of ‘nature’ was deeper and earth centered than that of the romanticists. The transformative quality of the power of ‘nature’ was the basic teaching of the transcendentalists. Henry David Thoreau had studied the existential energy of ‘nature’ embedded in the five elements, an idea specified in Indian Vedic literature. The transcendentalist not only romanticized ‘nature’ but also assigned spiritual qualities to it. But this transcendentalist thinking was an outcome of deep philosophic contemplation of the learned man who had studied various philosophies regarding ‘nature.’ Secondly, the transcendentalists deviated from the Romanticists’ picturesque sceneries to the wilderness of the American continent. Thoreau’s *Walden* is a perfect example of this shift from Wordsworth’s or Coleridge’s ‘nature’ celebration. After the transcendentalists, writers like John Muir, Carson and Leopold supported the idea of intrinsic worth of ‘nature.’ Their writings had immediate effect on the readers. From that point onwards Environmental activism has been gaining more and more momentum.

Tribal literature is one among the most important forms of ‘nature’ writing in the twentieth century. The oral folk stories are translated into written forms. The notion of the civilized people as better cultured than the tribal was reversed in the latter half of the twentieth century. Earlier, marginalization of the different resulted in the elitist notion of man as greater to animals and also civilized man as superior to the uncivilized. But various studies have shown that both the civilized systems and tribal settings have their own positives and negatives, advantages and disadvantages; in fact, each system
is great or mysterious in its own way. Both the civilized and the tribal have their own typical knowledge systems. Seeing one as less valuable than the other is a prejudice for, we cannot design a scale to measure the qualities due to the lack of common factors. So, there is no question of the civilized being better than the tribal. Recent studies in tribal folklore demonstrate the importance of tribal living styles.

The treatment of ‘nature’ differs in the tribal and civilized systems. The latter needs learning and effort to contemplate ‘nature’ but to the former it comes naturally. In different civilizations or cultures or religions the importance of ‘nature’ has been celebrated in different ways. Owing to consistent scientific growth, man became disoriented with the existence of the whole organisms and landscapes. This tendency persisted for centuries. Reason and enlightenment ideas had pushed ‘nature’ to the background and it took a Romantic movement to criticize the purely intellectual approach to life and reestablish the importance of ‘nature’ to human life.

There are tribal literatures all over the world that mostly give expression to loss of identity or vengeance towards their civilized opposite. For example, Alice Walker in her works speaks of the ill treatment meted out to the black by the white. She depicts the pathetic conditions of the doubly jeopardized black tribal women. Her writings are exhortations to stop violence by the white people. Her stance against oppression by the white has been one among the most vigorous.

Tribal communities are very close to primordial life than the civilized men that moved away from ‘nature’ and who now even seek to find life on other planets. In a
sense, the latter suffer from a collective amnesia regarding their primordial existence. According to Bevis the tribal being is made of “society, past, and place” (19).

Native Americans or the American Indians are the most celebrated tribal ‘nature’ writers of the current age. Before the arrival of Columbus, American Indians were the sole inhabitants of the North American continent. After the arrival of the white race, the Amerindian race began to shrink and disappear. The Caucasian race spread all over the continent except some interior parts, where the tribes continued to live the primitive way of life. The Spanish conquest destroyed the ancient Aztecs, Mayas and Peruvians. West Indian aborigines were replaced by Africans. The natives in Central and South America mixed with the Spanish and Portuguese invaders. In North America, the first European settlements were on the east coast. The Native Indians were forced to live in the reservation camps under the control of the United States government. Another reason behind their withdrawal from North-West is the extermination of the American bison on which they were fully dependent for their existence. Even after rehabilitation at the reservation camps their number tended to be on the decline. (Hutchinson 350-358)

Till the Spanish conquest, the American Indians remained unknown to the rest of the world. All the North American Indians have striking physical similarities. Numerous languages exist but they have a common linguistic structure. Men folk have no moustache and beard and they have similar facial structure. Both men and women have black, straight, coarse and very long hair. Generally their colour is coppery or yellowish brown. There are seven main stocks divided according to the linguistic base.
1. Athabascan or Athapascan-comprising Kuchins, Chippewyans, Apaches, and Navajos

2. Alonquin-including the Delawares, Abenakis, Chippewas or Ojibwas, Crees, Shawnees, Sac and Foxes, Blackfeet, Cheynnes, and Arapahoes

3. Iroquoian, represented by the Hurons, Eries, Mohawks, Tuscaroras, Senecas, Cayugas, Oneidas, Onondagas, and Cherokis

4. Siouan, with the Dakotas, Asiniboins, Omahas, Crows, Iowas, Osages, Catawbas, and Manakans

5. Shoshonean-comprising the Pawnees, Kiowas, Comanches, and Ultas.

6. Muskhonean-represented by the Creeks, Choctaws, Chicasas, Seminoles, and Apalachis

7. Puoblo-including the Zuni, Tegua, Jemez, and Hopi or Moki (Hutchinson 353)

Fleming takes a satirical view of the wide spread popularity that happened all of a sudden in the case of American Indian literature. It is a scholar’s ignorance to see literature as the written work. American Indian Literature which existed as myths, legends, songs, prayers and oratory is rediscovered when it is written down. For this rediscovery, he says, the literary world should be indebted to N. Scott Momaday. Though a lot of Native American writing is there, Momaday’s House Made of Dawn is considered an outstanding one. The approved opinion is that Native American Literature should be written by an American Indian and should contain ‘Native American experience’ (73-76).

Though the white man’s writing on Natives cannot be considered American Indian literature proper, it cannot be avoided altogether. John G. Neihardt’s When the
Tree Flowered, originally published in 1951 as The Fictional Autobiography of Eagle Voice, Sioux Indian, is a fictional depiction of the interviews with the three Lakota elders Eagle Elk, Black Elk and Andrew Knife. Fleming says that these Amerindian books depended on the non-native for getting answers to some fundamental environmental questions regarding Mother Earth. The popularity of Black Elk Speaks among the youth in 1960s can be seen as “seeking answers to contemporary problems in the teachings of Native American elders” (75).

There has been an increasing tendency to look at ‘nature’ for spiritual gratification. Most of the times, seeing ‘nature’ as a shrine has been unintentional. The mass has had no awareness of this shift of thought. Pointing this out, Burroughs is happy to know that mankind has finally started loving ‘nature.’ He foresees a change in religious perception of mankind. Spiritual journeys are no more constrained to the walls of a church.

The forms and creeds of religion change, but the sentiment of religion – the wonder and reverence and love we feel in the presence of the inscrutable universe – persists. Indeed, these seem to be renewing their life today in this growing love for all natural objects and in this increasing tenderness towards all forms of life. If we do not go to church as much as did our fathers, we go to the woods much more, and are much more inclined to make a temple of them than they were. (13)

This is a progressive phenomenon which is ironically a going back, a recourse to the wisdom of the primitives who seem to have mastered the art of harmonious living by
communing with ‘nature.’ Most structures of perception relating to the connections between man and ‘nature’ are characterized by political and religious concerns about ‘nature.’ The ‘nature’ writers did in-depth study on scriptures to find out wilderness references, so that they can revive those ideas like the Garden of Eden. Thoreau’s writings are rich in this search for spirituality in ‘nature.’

When Anglo Americans mixed religious ideas with ‘nature’ worship, it became secular. At the same time, Native Americans were propagating their religious ideas of ‘nature.’ Both groups had to learn from each other. Andrews and Susan compare the western view of authenticity of cultural value of heritage places to the aboriginal view.

Aboriginal cultural landscapes are expressions of a worldview that sees land in essentially spiritual rather than material terms and regards human as an integral part of the land, inseparable from its animals, plants and spirits. Key expressions of cultural value are primarily immaterial, such as oral traditions, traditional practices, and intense interactions with living and nonliving components of the environment. Growth and change are integral to these living landscapes and their cultural value (63).

The modes of cultural existence need for their sustenance living landscapes and there is a nagging doubt in all of us that we have been tampering with them, rather drastically in the recent decades dominated by indiscriminate consumerism. The way we react when comfort giving technologies fail us is a sure indication of how much of life and
happiness we have handed over to extraneous factors. Hence the “going back” to
‘nature’ at this moment in history is most likely not a romantic-sentimental return but
an impulse prompted by something deep within all of us.

In his recent studies of the ecological elements in the folk songs of Paroja tribe
in Odisha, India, Franco says that “beyond their physical needs, the forests also
satisfied the spiritual needs of the Paroja.” niSaani and Jaakeer are the sacred groves
of Paroja tribe, where they worshipped their gods, conducted rituals and festivals.
“The festivals honour their deities and culminate in community meals, strengthening
the common bond that unites the villagers” (50). Evoking spirits is a universal
characteristic. The Amerindian’s Sun Dance ceremony is also based on the same idea
of harmony between man and ‘nature.’

Franco observes further that the Paroja’s sustaining tradition urges equal
involvement of men and women in earning livelihood. But one of their songs portrays
the miserable state of a girl (who is told to stay back at home while her husband goes
out to the fields) who is married to a boy from a neighbouring city. The song goes like
this; saamu Jaavaa Jokkaa Kulli Jaavaa Jokkaa, tistu niyeeti seheeir dentaa, Ganaa
too Gatri ganaa too.(paali). [She has finished cooking suvaan (Fostail bristle grass,
Setaria italic (L.) P. Beauv.) and rice, and now she wants to go to the field. But they do not
allow her to do so. Trans. Franco]. Even the changes in their living pattern are transformed
into oral songs, which show that, though they want to be part of the major urban culture,
ythey are in great despair to lose their traditions of living in harmony with nature
(Franco 50). An identical dilemma is discernible in Momaday’s writings also.
The turn of the twentieth century has seen wide spread interest in the studies of mythologies of various civilizations and tribal cultures all over world. Mostly, the mythologies of the aboriginals were given prominence for the close connection they still keep with the myths. Most of the Indian regional festivals are based on myths of great heroic kings and gods of past. Mythological studies have been given importance for their environmental teachings.

Myths are serious stories that reflect a society’s spiritual foundations. They are symbols of human experience that each culture values and preserves because they embody the world view or important beliefs of that culture. Myths may explain origins, natural phenomena, and death; they may describe the nature and function of divinities; or they may provide models of virtuous and heroic behavior by relating the adventures of heroes. They may include legends as well as elements of folklore. They impart a feeling of awe for whatever is mysterious and marvelous in life, depicting a universe in which human beings take their place in a much larger scheme (Donna xiv).

Myths are the repositories of deeds, exploits and characters through which the natives have tried to maintain touch with their ancestry and heritage. They also carry experimental connections between the tribals and ‘nature.’ Myths ask deep philosophical questions related to one’s existence like; “Who am I? What is the nature of the universe in which I live? How do I relate to that universe? What do I do in order to survive? How much control I have over my own life? How do I balance my own desires with my
responsibilities to my family and my community? How can I lead a satisfying life? How can I reconcile myself to the inevitability of death?” (Rosenberg xiv). These questions are answerable in many ways in accordance with different theories and approaches. But seeking answers to these questions in myths is the trend in the twenty first century. Myths are the sources of truth and knowledge for Western civilizations. It contains norms as to how a man should behave in a society and how a society should function. There are heroic models in myths to be adopted and adapted for self improvement. Greek, Babylonian, Egyptian, European, Indian mythologies are storehouses of knowledge. Many of the myths contain symbolic representations. Rosenberg elaborates on how these myths anthropomorphize earth by attributing feminine, motherly character to the earth. The Bronze Age people of Greek were Gaea worshippers. As farmers they considered Gaea as the great Earth goddess who is named after her “ability” to “give birth” to all plants like women who can ‘give birth’ to children. As mother earth herself was a feminine entity, their other chief deities were also of the same gender (Rosenberg 4).

“Although myths are often said to be ‘religious’ or to have reference to ‘the sacred’, a more neutral analytical observation would be that they are primary foundational materials of a social group” (Doty 19). Folklore has its different expressions in different genres namely legend, saga, epic, ballad and folktale. The Navajo myths hold that the Holy wind or Nilchi is the life source. According to James McNeley, the Holy Wind
is “suffusing all of nature, Holy Wind gives life, thought, speech, and motion to all living things and serves as the means of communication between all elements of the living world” (1).

Though there were early writers like Mc Nickle and Ridge, the Native American Renaissance in literature begins with Momaday. While Ridge and Mc Nickle brought too much political and historical data into their writing to give a realistic picture of the Native American’s contemporary life, Momaday gives importance to giving solutions to the spiritual and emotional struggles of the individual and the community.

As a descendent of Kiowa ancestry, Momaday played a key role as a poet in the revival of Kiowa folklore. Literary critics focus on him mainly for nativity and ‘nature’ centered writing. His ability to convert the local stories in oral form into written form without loss of impact is so typical of him. The quality of his storytelling has earned much critical appreciation. He brought into limelight the ‘nature’ centered living system of those prairie people.

Momaday sees the survival strength of his people in their ability to adjust to their own comfortable limited surrounding as well as other places which is much easier now compared to some years before. He knows that they have transformed their ancient strength as hunters and warriors into capacity for thought and artistic creativity. A survey of criticism on Momaday shows that unlike the other Native American writers he has not focused on the ill effects of the White domination over the Native Indians or the lost or confused identity of his tribe. It is true that one can spot deliberate expressions of fury against the white community in the form of dialogues and alienated characters, but these instances are very rare. He as a writer is more solution-prone rather than protest prone. His use of alienation of the protagonist is only for the sake of expressing the character’s intense wish to embrace his ancestral living style, to go back to the landscape in which his own people had flourished, and more than these, seeking wisdom in simple living by coming close to ‘nature.’ The trait of finding solace in ‘nature’ and in rural landscapes is common to all Momaday protagonists.
Momaday’s books effectively succeed in saving and storing treasures of the oral traditions of their ancestors, which have been facing extinction even from their memories. Folk stories are age old tradition among the people and they have existed through oral transmission. These stories depict their living by hunting and trapping of animals, their worship of the wind, sun and buffalo, their food system, their medicine system and their knowledge of seasons. These stories are treasure houses of detailed descriptions of the ‘nature’ centered, simple living by a group of inhabitans.

While Thoreau, Emerson, or Muir saw the prairie land or the mountain ranges in terms of their beauty, sublimity and ecological concerns, Momaday depicts a much deeper version of the ‘nature’ which was once an inevitable means of existence of his ancestors. Such understanding is demonstrated by the retelling of the stories and retracing of the landscapes. Mills affirms Momaday’s authenticity: “Momaday is unwilling to write about anything that he has not examined and does not know intimately, and his focus is restrained yet powerful” (5). All his writings deal with the native notions of the Southwest and the Kiowa and Navajo tribes. The places where he lived and experiences he had are the settings and contents of his books. He was born at the Kiowa and Comanche hospital at Lawton in Oklahoma. His family stayed in different places such as Navajo Reservations in New Mexico and Arizona, Jemez Pueblo in Central New Mexico, which is portrayed as Walatowa in *House Made of Dawn*. Exposure to different places and different sceneries must also be a reason for the comprehensiveness and authenticity one comes across in his works.
The Native American vision of the sacred is that the numinous is present in the ‘nature’ surrounding people whether it is the mountains or the plains. There is no extra terrestrial or celestial non-‘nature’ spirits. Momaday tells us that once man realizes this sacred aspect of his surrounding he will establish a closer connection with it and he can have a more passionate rapport with the organisms in it. He connects this rapport with ‘nature’ to the bond one has with parents, grandparents, and great grandparents. This bond is fundamental to life and to Momaday any denial of it will only lead to collapse. Mills comments:

To Momaday, any separation from nature deteriorates the human spirit. Lack of positive relationship, disregard for ancestral heritage, and denial of tribal memory can hasten an individual’s, or culture’s demise. As a result, Momaday moves repeatedly from crises to vividly detailed descriptions of landscapes, because he believes that an intimate connection with ‘place’ is vital to human awareness and understanding. In *The Way to Rainy Mountain* the historical description of an important ceremonial tepee’s destruction by fire is followed by a slow, soothing illustration of silence and shadow at day’s end. (6)

Landscapes seem to have the capability to nurse Momaday back to his roots, origin and culture. They are the maps that help in navigating to one’s ‘home.’ To know their land, Native Indians need the support of their ancestors for a number of reasons. Lakowski sees that “as in most modern Indian novels, there is a wise elder or medicine man who provides insight and a link to the historical mythical past” (128). For a
reunion with the ancient ways of living one need to know the stories and to have access to the stories one needs the help of a storyteller grandmother or grandfather. It is a crucial nexus; one is not complete without the other. If one misses the storyteller then one misses his ancient traditions and a lot of things that he may know from the stories. This idea is exemplified in *The Ancient Child* where the grandmother is the link between Set and his native land.

The place relevant to the discussion, the Southwest is especially rich in scenic beauty. The tribes like Apaches, Navajos, and Hopis dwell in and around the Grand Canyon, the mesas and the valleys. The grandeur and beauty of these places are what attracted the invaders in the past. The Spanish invaders called the Southwest *El Norte Misterio*, the northern mystery.

There can be different explanations as to how a place attracts the mind of a man. The phenemenologist Casey explains it in terms of *genius loci* or the spirit of the place.

To get into the spirit of a place is to enter into what makes that place such a special spot, into what is concentrated there like a fully saturated colour. But the spirit of the place is also expansive. Moving out, entering not just the area lying before and around me but entering myself and others as its witnesses or occupants, this genial spirit sweeps the binaries of Self and Other into the embracing fold, the literal implication of emplacement (314).
Casey implies that to each individual the landscape gives a different kind of feeling. If one is happy to be near the seashore, there are others who feel fright. Vine Deloria Jr. declares that “land must have an unsuspected spiritual energy or identity that shapes and directs human activities” (148).

Momaday exhorts us to know ‘nature’ more closely. The more one understands the life of ‘nature’ the more the gap between man and ‘nature’ is reduced, facilitating the restoration of the old bond. Craving for a life of luxury enabled by technology, man has distanced himself from the old traditions. In Man Made of Words Momaday argues: “one effect of the technological revolution has been to uproot us from the soil….our sense of the natural order has become dull and unreliable. Like the wildness itself, our sphere of instinct has diminished in proportion as we have failed to imagine truly what it is” (qtd. in Hobson 166 ). The depletion of this intuitive energy is a major concern that runs through all of his works.

Momaday’s idea of ‘nature’ as home is typical of the Native American philosophy of ‘nature.’ Like all other Native American writers he too writes about wilderness in depth and how he becomes whole when in ‘nature.’ Gary Snyder explains how one should relate one’s wildness to the wild ‘nature’ outside. It is ridiculous to prefer to experience only peaceful ‘nature’ for the comfort it provides. ‘Nature’ must be taken for what it is. Such an attitude will enable man to realize and cope with the two sides of his own self. Excessive emphasis is laid by modern man on the escape from ‘id’ instincts that he feels are responsible for decrease in his civilized nature. But once he accepts the coexistence of the wild and the calm ‘natures’ around him, he can form a
better idea of himself. Snyder underlines the importance of this understanding of all the aspects of ‘nature.’ He describes ‘nature’ as a home where “more familiar” and “less familiar places” parallel existence. “Wilderness had implied chaos, Eros, the unknown, realms of taboo, the habitat of both the ecstatic and the demonic” (7).

The modern man fears his instincts as much as he fears the wildness of ‘nature.’ To be closer to ‘nature’ this instinctual part has to work. The primitive man had instinctual connections with ‘nature.’ The modern man has lost those connections and stands deprived of instinctual sensations. Running away or suppression has never been an effective strategy. To conquer id, one must accept and know it if balance and control are to be achieved.

The aesthetic side of ‘nature’ has been an interesting but less researched field in literature. Serious studies on aesthetic experience began in the eighteenth century with Immanual Kant and David Hume. Kant sees aesthetic experience as the “primary form of mental experience” (Hagman 16). He separated aesthetic experience from all other emotions.

The source of aesthetic experience lay not in the enjoyment of the beautiful object, but in the recognition of the subjective knowledge of universal ideals. These ideals do exist in some abstract realm (as with Plato) or in divinity (as with Augustine, for example); rather, they are a priori universal conceptualizations that form the basis of our rational judgments. For example, though we have all had innumerable experiences of individual men of various stature, size and shape, we also possess a
mental model of man, the perfect, formal concept of the beautiful man. Aesthetic experience is based on this understanding of inner ideals. Thus, Kant attempted to develop a theory of aesthetic experience that was both human and rational, a form of perception that formed the very ground of rationality and judgment (Hagman 14).

The ability to conceptualize determines the way we structure our experiences. Response to and perception of ‘nature’ are two essential ingredients that can lead us to conceptualize and structure in order to make sense of living.

Rosenberg is of the opinion that aesthetic experience is a definite requirement for and means to cultural or artistic expression. In all ages, people need to participate or be spectators to artistic expressions. “Even in the face of trauma and death, aesthetic experience can persist like spiritual oxygen for the survival meaning.” He continues, “when an artist expresses meaning through perfected cultural forms, or a person experiences a sunrise as extraordinary beautiful, he or she is tapping into archaic aspects of human experience by which the formal aspects of our relationship to the world are felt to be both special and valuable” (Foreword vi).

In Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Carlson describes five models of aesthetic appreciation. They are object, engaging, arousal, post-modern, and metaphysical imagination models. In these models he differentiates between suitable and unsuitable models of ‘nature’ appreciation. The first one is not suitable, he says, as it appreciates the object only, not its surroundings, or ‘nature’ as whole. The second one is also not suitable as it appreciates only the picturesque ‘nature,’ and also in a mere two
dimensional way. The environmental model on the contrary appreciates ‘nature’ as a whole. If one has more knowledge of ‘nature’ one can appreciate it more. The engaging model has no subject-object difference. In this model, describing the aesthetic experience is difficult. Postmodern model sees ‘nature’ as a text. One cannot purely look at ‘nature’ but must include culture for appreciation. There is a tendency for culture to dominate ‘nature.’ Unlike intellectual appreciation of ‘nature,’ arousal model deals with one’s appreciation of ‘nature’ according to one’s emotional state. The metaphysical imagination model sees ‘nature’ as philosophy of life or meaning of life (www.rep.routledge.com).

Environmental aesthetics as a separate form of thinking began in the latter half of the twentieth century. While in earlier times aesthetic studies focused on art forms, recent developments in aesthetics focus on natural environment. Environmental aesthetics has its root in the landscape aesthetics of the eighteenth century. Its influence is seen in the division of environmental aesthetic objects as large and small, like the large mountains and the small gardens. In fact, environmental aesthetics deals with the world at large. There are two approaches as to how natural environment should be appreciated. The first one deals with the subject engaging more deeply with the aesthetic object. It has to deal with the feeling of the subject. The second approach is purely cognitive. In this approach, one has to know more about the object to discuss it. The knowledge gathered can be from any subject, like history or geography of a place or a natural phenomenon and also from scriptures or folk narratives. While the first one is simple enjoyment of ‘nature’ by anyone, the second one is more of an intellectual analysis of ‘nature’ (www.rep.routledge.com)
The numinosity of the landscapes of the Southwest has been experienced and expressed by many scholars. According to Lionel Corbett the place has the power of “filling a person with awe and wonder, irresistibly attractive, allowing them effortlessly to lose all track of time, providing joy, or removing all sense of self in a felt oneness with the world” (65).

Scholars from the fields of Philosophy and Psychology took interest in spiritual studies in the second half of the nineteenth century. Scientific and technological achievements were at their peak and spiritual qualities were on the decline. Most of the times, scientific achievement suppressed spiritual aspirations of people for, science dealt with the real whereas spirituality with paranormal things.

Schermer argues that all of us possess a ‘divinity’ within. Human beings always have the tendency to rise above normal life to attain divine experience. The mediums can be “dreams, literature and arts, meditation, peak experiences, and altered state of consciousness” (29). Spirituality is part of one’s being. One’s mysterious nature always tends to go for more and more mysterious experiences. Schermer wonders at Blake’s expression of spirituality at the peak of the age of reason and decides that “all religions… emanated from a common source within, and found spirituality to be present in art, poetry, and other ‘soulful’ expressions of our humanity” (29).

The spirituality the aboriginals attribute to ‘nature’ is studied by Kleyemer. He says that the aboriginal peoples’ idea of the surrounding ‘nature’ is “often insightful, protective, visionary and reverent.” And the folklore and even their language show this concern over ‘nature’ (157).
The profusion of analysands and analysts who are exploring spiritual practice and the increasing number of analytic conferences and articles on psychoanalysis and spirituality suggest that we may be witnessing a hunger for and a return of the spiritually repressed in contemporary psychoanalysis. More than five hundred therapists and spiritual seekers, for example, attended a conference in 1994 in New York city on ‘Healing the suffering Self: A Dialogue among Psychoanalysts and Buddhists’ sponsored by two psychoanalytic institutes. One of the reasons that increasing numbers of people are turning away from psychoanalysis may be its secular psychology, not simply managed care or the anti-analytic contemporary cultural climate. (Rubin 70)

The human designed modules have lost their popularity and appeal as they do not ‘fulfil’ in a real sense. In other words such therapeutic models do not take into account the fact that man is a part of a much larger picture. Self worth and self esteem are better realized in connectedness rather than in isolation.

In this context, ‘nature’ writing gains relevance as it purports to resecure the severed connections of man with ‘nature.’ Momaday in The Man Made of Words gives an account of how, to believe something one should be deeply involved in it.

The landscape of the American West has to be seen to be believed. And perhaps, conversely, it has to be believed in order to be seen. Here is the confluence of image and imagination. I am a writer and a painter. I’m therefore interested in what it is to see, how seeing is
accomplished, how the physical eye and the mind’s eye are related, how the act of seeing is, or can be expressed in art and in language, and how these things are sacred in ‘nature,’ as I believe them to be. Belief is the burden of seeing…to be into the heart of something is to believe in it. In order to see this extent, to see and to accomplish belief in the seeing, one must be prepared. The preparation is spiritual exercise (105).

The passage clearly brings out the importance of “seeing” the landscape not simply with the physical eye but with the mind’s eye too. There should be this landscape to see first without which the imaginative act cannot happen. Hence, spiritual experience cannot be had in abstraction but only in a dynamic interaction with the land one lives in.

Jung’s analysis of the human psyche’s close connection with natural environment is also very relevant here. Corbet’s explanation of the Jungian concept is quite illuminating.

Jung’s model of the psyche, because of its stress on the numinosum, allows a sacramental understanding of the psyche as coextensive with nature, in which the divine is felt to be imminent by virtue of experience of the Self. When we experience the numinosum in the wilderness, we are ‘projecting’ onto nature something that is actually inside our selves; we are experiencing the reality of the continuity of the Self across the barrier of the skin. The structure of the self, which includes both our psychology and physiology, is determined by the same archetype or spiritual dynamics as those which obtain in nature at large. (106)
All of us ‘make’ ourselves in a sense and this making involves pitting our consciousness against various phenomena among which ‘nature’ reigns supreme. Our self can grow and reach fullness only through the “spiritual dynamics” with ‘nature.’

The spiritual continuum from an individual self to the outer surrounding is the basic feature of the Native American’s rapport with ‘nature.’ Chinese philosophy of Feng-Shui deals with a place’s power over an individual’s health. The spiritual aspect of the psyche is given much significance in Jungian analytical psychology for the first time in the field. The Jungian concept of archetypes offers explanations as to how the spiritual part of the psyche works. Jung’s ‘collective unconscious’ theory attaches much importance to man’s spiritual need compared to Freud’s neglect of spirituality.

Freud insisted on the importance of the biological instincts such as the sex drive, while Jung held that the rock bottom of the psyche consisted in the collective historical experience of the human race, which included spirituality in the form of what he later called archetypes, inherited templates which included intimations and perceptions of gods, goddesses and other spiritual entities. Splitting from Freudian camp Jung distinguished between the instinctually based personal unconscious and the archetypal collective unconscious. (Hagman 23)

The value of spirituality and the spiritual experiences is increasingly understood in today’s world. The interconnectedness of all life is also supported by what is happening in the field of particle physics. The findings relating what happens at the quantum level
are most fascinating. The mind over matter philosophy has been conclusively challenged and it is now a matter of mind harnessed to matter.

For long, the tendency to treat ‘nature’ as an agent of redemption has often been considered romantic, sentimental, mystical and escapist stuff. The time seems to have come for us to relearn what is lost to us, through works such as Momaday’s that transcribe experiential routes to regain harmony with ‘nature.’ Hence the present study on Momaday’s selected works with the focus on the interactive dynamism between man and ‘nature.’ There has not been any full length study on this aspect of Momaday’s works. The study also includes how Momaday, unlike other writers of his ilk, attempts and succeeds too in maintaining a balance between certain pristine qualities and accommodating inevitable changes.

The oeuvre of Momaday’s writing constitutes an attempt to fulfil his dream of becoming a storyteller, as it is the most important part of the tribal man’s life. The researcher has taken up only his memoirs and fiction as they focus on the dynamic interaction between man and ‘nature’ and demonstrate how one makes oneself through it. He admits that his protagonists are duplicates of real life men that he sees around him in his hometown. How ‘nature’ affects a man aesthetically and spiritually comprises the study’s line of argument, and the selected works offer good scope for it. In other works by him thought processes and man’s emotional correspondences with ‘nature’ do not get much prominence. The memoirs and novels together thus constitute a tribal man’s spiritual journey involving struggles and recovery. The first book The Way to Rainy Mountain is specifically chosen keeping in mind the possibility that the tribe’s
folk stories can help in inferring the meaning of the experiences of the major fictional characters and also the living presence of qualities contained in the mythical stories.

The first chapter deals with how man interacted with ‘nature’ in different ages. It explores the old religious scriptures to the myths of the aborigines. While the scriptures of the mainstream religions and the oral philosophy of the aborigines have the same concept to convey, both state and restate the importance of the symbiotic relationship of man with his environment for his good mind, soul and body. The aesthetic and the sacred aspects of ‘nature’ as explained and interpreted by psychologists and philosophers are studied.

How far the mainstream cultures depend on the aboriginal folklore, their rituals, and art forms for their various expressions of earth centered learning is surveyed. A modern man who has come far away from the ancient teachings has to rely on these aboriginal philosophies to reestablish his bond with ‘nature.’ Various views on ‘nature’ across the globe are summarized. Special emphasis is laid on the beauty and holiness of ‘nature’ and how these two factors can comfort a man. The role of ‘nature’ as a constant spiritual support is discussed.

Chapter II deals with Momaday’s two memoirs *The Way to Rainy Mountain* and *The Names : A Memoir*. It depicts how Momaday explores his native land aesthetically and spiritually for which he makes use of folk tales, his small talks with the Native American elders, his childhood memories and his travel through the landscapes where Kiowas dwelt. The chapter then discusses how his aesthetic appreciation of the land and his spiritual connection with it give him a lot of comfort.
Chapter III deals with the positive changes the landscapes brought about in the life of Abel, the protagonist of *House Made of Dawn*. How the land helped him in his individuation process is analyzed. It shows how even against complete mental and physical break down, the beauty Abel perceives in the land and the rituals cure him. Abel represents the alienated modern man in distress. He has nobody to lead or support him but the magnificent sights of the landscape, the soothing breeze, the different shades of the sunlight and the holiness of ‘nature.’ He is the representative of all the confused tribal people whose religious learning, a mixture of Christian and the tribal traditions, results in paradoxes. His aesthetic involvement with landscapes since childhood helps Abel reestablish his lost spiritual connections with nature. At the end, he restores himself fully by engaging himself with a ritual of his ancestors in which he realizes how much he is part and parcel of ‘nature.’ He feels the union with ‘nature’ and cherishes the feeling of being part of such a wonderful ‘nature.’ He feels how the breeze touches his ash covered chest, how it revitalizes his exhausted body. In these moments of understanding he is not alone but part of beautiful earth. These moments of epiphany also help him forget his bitter past.

Chapter IV discusses *The Ancient Child* and Set, the main character, who is resurrected after being exposed to natural beauty and sacred rituals. While Abel has childhood memories of his native landscapes and tribal ancestral culture, Set is almost ignorant of his tribal background and leads the successful life of an artist in New York city. Later, he realizes that he is enslaved by the mechanized world and that he cannot express what he really wants to in his paintings. When his paintings can no more carry the
flow of his thoughts and visions, he realizes the need for a change. A telegram from his native land acts as a catalyst to his change. After being subjected to pressure by his manager he almost loses his mental balance. His partner takes him to his native land where he reconnects with the ancestors and the land. Here, he is taught to look at the beauty and holiness of ‘nature’ by the medicine woman Grey. When he fully realizes the mythical meaning of his name and enters into a mystical union with ‘nature,’ he recognizes the spiritual aspect of the bear power in him. His recovery as a full human being is the focal point of this chapter.

As a painter he needed to know his environment and his relationship with it. When this relationship became complex, there had to be sufficient time for his consciousness to accommodate it. At such a time, he is pressurized to repeat the same paintings and feeling sick as an artist he becomes depressed and breaks down. Painting for him is not just work to earn money but the means of communication of his self’s connections with the environment.

Chapter V sums up the discussions of the all the preceding chapters. Scope for further research is also discussed. For Momaday, Abel and Set ‘nature’ is simply not the surrounding. They have taken both the beneficial and the destructive aspects of wilderness into their understanding. The recovered protagonists understand the importance of holistic existence in the universe and the necessity of sustaining the principle of mutuality between man and ‘nature.’