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Visiting Indian English Novels with Special Reference to Ecological Elements

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Abstract:

The spectre of global warming has jolted humanity to the extent never seen before. On the one hand, unchecked urbanisation and industrialization coupled with emissions from automobiles, air-conditioners, and other sources. On the other hand, needless deforestation and natural resource exploitation have brought us an alarming reality. It is only fitting that those involved in the literary world take arms and try to raise awareness among readers, particularly among the younger generation, of the critical need to act quickly to address the problem. The literary works of prominent Indian authors have been produced that highlight the authors' interest in this respect. In this paper, I investigate the field of Indian English Fiction and critically study works by eminent authors such as Amitav Ghosh, Kiran Desai, Arundhati Roy and some not-so-eminent authors. I conclude that these authors share a common concern, even though their works deal with life in different areas affected by different kinds of problems in different environments.

Keywords: Indian English Literature, Ecology, Global warming, Postcolonial, Postmodernism

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Introduction:

The shifting atmospheres of the natural world have long fascinated writers and poets. It extols the wholesome qualities of nature, such as its majesty, purity, and peace, which have a salutary effect on people. At the same time, it tells the story of nature's majestic and dreadful moods, which taught man his position in the world while simultaneously humbling him. This is a truth that applies to the oldest form of literature, namely poetry, which emerged in all of the globe's cultures. Poetry has been around for a very long time.

Since the time of Shakespeare, English literature has placed a significant emphasis on the natural world. This trend continued until the 18th century, when the concept of "nature" gave way to "human nature," marking the beginning of a period in which a gradual conflict developed between nature and culture. At that time, culture was given greater weight than nature, thanks to the boost that it received from discoveries in science. The idea of the "noble savage" proposed by Rousseau sparked a reaction, which led to the French Revolution and the brief Romantic period, both of which were unable to withstand the assault of industrialization. This led to the beginning of the modern era. There was no way to halt the march of scientific innovation.

Science served as a pillar in the cultural foundation. Therefore, the intense attention on psychology in modern literature further removed it from the physical world; this had the opposite effect of what was intended for future generations, which was to remedy the imbalance. Literature transformed from a colourful pageant of nature into a functional art form after the political crises in Europe that followed the First World War had a profound effect on the individual's mind. This resulted in literature being stripped of all its trappings and the microscope being focused solely on the human psyche. The conflict has not been resolved, and as a result, in these postmodern times, we view this connection as an ambiguous nature/culture binary or a nature/humanity binary in which neither term is to be favoured over the other. Neither word is to be preferred more than the other. Considering all of this, it is pretty "natural" or "in order" to acknowledge nature as a separate entity.

At the same time, factual data demonstrates that the actual effects of giving nature a rough deal have resulted in highly catastrophic repercussions for humans. The phenomena of global warming, which has led to a hole in the ozone layer across the globe, melting glaciers, rising

sea levels, and other climate calamities that are being felt everywhere in the world, are too obvious to be ignored. It should come as no surprise to the man that he should only ignore nature at his own risk if he chooses to do so. As a direct result of this, the focus of attention of literary academics has shifted back to nature.

Even though the fundamental tenets of postmodernism lend legitimacy to the native and local elements, the normal tendency in contemporary Indian English literature has been to follow the trends in Western literature. This is despite the fact that the tendency has been to follow the trends in Western literature. There is some solace in the fact that nature is being treated differently from the standpoint of purely scientific and intellectual inquiry, which itself has mercifully seen its weaknesses in having mercilessly ravaged nature all along and brought the world close to an ecological disaster. Whatever the case may be, this finding provides some solace.

When analysing Indian English Literature to determine its connections to the natural world, the reader's first thing that jumps out is that the preoccupation with the natural world is at its highest point in the poetry. This is understandable when poetry was the first literary form that mesmerised humans at the beginning of civilization. On the other side, it looks as though there is no involvement whatsoever in the play, but then again, Indian English drama is not particularly rich either. Then, to determine people's perspectives on the natural world, let us analyse some modern works of fiction, which is the category that features the most published works at present.

Our primary goal in carrying out this activity, which focuses on location, land, niche, home, and habitat, among other things, is to understand better the author's perspective about the natural world. The many problems may include the following: Is the only purpose of what is referred to as a "pen-picture" in writing just to give the reader the impression that he is experiencing a scene through his mental eye by providing a background and giving a feeling of physical context? Is nature depicted as an autonomous entity out there, much like existentialists speak of the world as 'being-there' in its own right? Does the symbiotic bond between a mother and her offspring have any bearing on whether or not it affects people living in its lap? Is what is commonly referred to as "eco-ethics" or sound ecological principle consistent with the values that are articulated in work? Is there any new thought that has been

done about how to combat the self-destructive behaviour that humans has been engaged in toward the natural world? Does the piece of writing attempt to reshape our aesthetic enjoyment of nature, such as our notions of what constitutes a picturesque or magnificent setting, etc.?

Indian English Fiction and Ecology

Concerns about the environment have always been present, albeit to varying degrees, in Indian literature written in English. In early works of literature, such as Raja Rao's Kanthapura, the residents of Kanchamma are shown as worshipping the river Kanchamma in the same way as Hindus all throughout India revere the Ganga. The river Sarayu is shown as having a positive impact on a variety of individuals throughout R.K. Narayan's literature that is set in the Malgudi region. There is talk of a hideaway on the other side of the river, of jungle tribes that live in the hills, and other such things, all of which combine to create a mysterious site infused with the spirit of the location. In later chapters of Kamala Markandaya's works, the nefarious effects of urbanisation are shown. Any discussion on the environment must include examining how people feel about the land their ancestors gave them. In her book, "Nectar in a Sieve," the protagonist, Nathan, is reduced to abject poverty due to the combined effects of industrialisation and drought. Because of his advanced age, he is unable to pursue any other line of work. As a result, he and his wife are compelled to relocate to the city, forcing them to resort to panhandling.

In works of literature, the names of plants and animals can occasionally be used to represent human conditions symbolically; this reveals the author's care for the environment. At other points throughout the story, a description of this kind is required because of how the narrative develops. In the works of authors such as Arundhati Roy, Anita Desai, and Kiran Desai, amongst many others, the depiction of the local culture and way of life is incomplete without mentioning the local flora and fauna, including birds, insects, animals, and even plants.

Author and environmental activist Arundhati Roy has been a fervent supporter of the ecological movement. Together with Vandana Shiva and Medha Patkar, she led the opposition to the planned dam on the Narmada river. In her acclaimed novel "The God of Small Things," which was published in 1997, one encounters nature in all of her unspoiled grandeur in the shape of a river that is free to flow wherever it pleases. The picturesqueness

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of the setting captivates the author, and the river Meenachal, as viewed through the eyes of a kid for the entirety of the story, conjures up a lovely image in the imagination of the reader:“It was warm, the water green like reapplied silk. With fish in it. With the sky and trees in it. And at night, the broken yellow moon in it” (123).

However, modernisation causes things to shift. We discover that over some time, the shift in culture brought on by the contemporary trappings of life is responsible for a change in public attitude:“Years later when Rahel returned, it greeted her with a ghastly skull’s smile, with holes where teeth had been and a limp hand raised from a hospital bed….Despite the fact that it was June, and raining, the river was no more than a swollen drain now” (124).

The river had lost its pristine beauty and it “smelled of shit and pesticides brought with World Bank loans. Most of the fish had died. The ones that survived suffered from fin-rot and had broken out in boils” (13). The river is polluted with untreated waste from nearby factories, as well as plastic bags and weeds. The story provides a detailed account of the destructive consequences of industrialization on several types of animals. Chacko is unconcerned about the death of a temple elephant that was caused by its contact with a high-tension electric line, despite the fact that this event occurred. On the other side, Estha is uninterested in the puppy that follows him back to Ayemenen after he has been gone for twenty-three years. The puppy attempts to show Estha how close he is, but Estha ignores him.

The concept that urbanisation and industrialisation might cause a decline in the quality of natural habitats is not a recent one. We have seen catastrophes on a monumental scale, such as the Bhopal Gas Tragedy, in which the American multinational corporation Union Carbide took all of the earnings when business was booming but then simply shut the door on the people, including its employees, after the toxic gas leaked out due to poor maintenance of the machinery and killed approximately 2500 people and left a large number of people permanently maimed for life. The unfortunate people were duped not just by the international corporation but also by their own government, which had been in cahoots with the multinational corporation. In the book "Animal's People," written by Indra Sinha, the author provides a detailed depiction of life's misery for the people. The main character, a young man 19 years old, is unable to stand up and must instead walk on all fours due to the toxic chemicals discharged from the facility.As Ma Franci tells him, he was not always like that:

"Such a beautiful little boy you were, when you were three, four, years. Huge eyes you had, black like the Upper Lake at midnight plus a whopping head of curls. How you used to grin. […] your smile would break a mother's heart" (1).

And because of this, he shies away from the mirror! His condition is comparable to that of the victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, who were permanently crippled as a result of the bombing that the United States carried out.

In this part of Aymenon, Velutha is worshipped as the deity of the minutiae. He is a man who lives in balance with his environment, and as a result, he makes a living by crafting little objects out of wood and many other natural materials.Roy describes him as making “tiny windmills, rattle, minute jewels boxes out of dried palm reeds; he could carve perfect boats out of tapioca stems and figurines on cashew nuts” (74).When his mother kicks him out of the house, he runs away to the woods along the riverbank, where he finds solace in the company of animals and plants. He sleeps on the bank of the river, just like the main character in Margaret Atwood's novel Surfacing does, and he collects fish from the river, then he prepares the fish over an open fire. Near the side of the river is where he and Ammu begin and continue their sexual relationship throughout thirteen nights. The natural world acts as a testament to their connection.

There is some truth to the idea that nature influences how people spend their lives. In the novel "The God of Small Things," the relationship between the two siblings is a reflection of nature in its purest form. Both individuals break down the restrictions that have been set up by society and give in to the natural yearning. Does the author look favourably upon this sort of romantic partnership? This question is not addressed since there are no fallout results from this link and no character remarks.

The Hungry Tide, published in 2004, is an excellent example of eco-fiction written by Amitav Ghosh. Not only does it emphasise the ecology of a natural location that is one of a kind, the way of life of the people and animals who live there, etc., but it also deals with critical concerns that have an impact on ecology and the human population that is inextricably linked to it. Long back, the economist T.R. Malthus had pointed out that “the power of population is indefinitely greater than the power in the earth to produce subsistence for man” (73). The Hungry Tide paints a vivid picture of how those who have been

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dispossessed work the land so that it will give fruit for them so that they may sustain themselves. The politics of multinational corporations, which lead to a horrific event that claims the lives of thousands upon thousands of people, are also discussed in the novel. In addition, there is a sweet love theme that develops throughout the story, but which is not restricted by obstacles such as language, social status, or cultural background.

The novel's main characters, Kanai Dutt and Piyali (or Piya) Roy, are introduced to the reader at an early stage in the story. While the former is a successful entrepreneur who operates a translation service out of Delhi, India, the latter is a Bengali-American researcher working in the United States. Kanai, who is in his forties, is on his way to visit an aunt who manages a charity hospital on one of the islands called Lusibari. The aunt has invited Kanai's nephew to come and take charge of a bundle of papers that belonged to the aunt's late husband, an intellectual activist. Kanai's uncle also passed away recently. Piya, who is in her twenties, is currently in India to research the behaviour of dolphins.

According to the environmentalist Jonathan Bate, the dilemma of Green reading is that "it must, yet it cannot, separate ecopoetics from ecopolitics" (266). When multinational corporations (MNCs), for instance, tamper with the DNA of seeds and flowers for the purpose of developing exploitative inventions, they must find themselves in conflict with ecologists. The tragic Morichjhapi murder of Hindu refugees from the country that was formerly known as East Pakistan serves as the focal point of the political discourse in Ghosh's novel. Despite the harsh topography of the Sundarbans, which had a significant number of tiny islands that were prone to become inundated due to the regular waves that came crashing in from the ocean, over 30,000 people had lived there. These islands were home to hazardous animals such as tigers and had dense mangrove forests. There is evidence that in 2002, the government of West Bengal, in conjunction with a business house known as Sahara Pariwar, forcibly removed around 10,000 residents of Jambudwip Island from the island in order to make way for the construction of a resort for vacationers. Although it may appear to be in favour of ecological preservation at first glance, the concept of a naturally attractive ecosystem that is kept in pristine condition to attract visitors does not reflect the reality of the situation.

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However, the backdrop of the Sundarbans, which spans over portions of India and Bangladesh and is a place where man is perpetually pitted against nature, is of greater interest to us than the narrative itself. However, the people who were forced to flee their homes could establish mutually beneficial relationships with the natural world around them, drawing their nutrition from the environment while also making efforts to protect it. They hoped that one day they might be able to return to the Sundarbans, which they thought of as a portion of their native land. (165). They worked diligently to make Marichjhapi one of the most developed islands in the Sundarbans as quickly as possible. In only a few short months, the area established a vibrant regional economy without receiving any assistance from the government. The Left Front government of West Bengal, which felt insulted by the successful resettlement of refugees in Marichjhapi, accused the refugees of having violated the forest acts and caused a serious ecological imbalance. This was the unintended consequence of the successful resettlement of refugees in Marichjhapi. (Mohanty 176).

The novel's narrative brings the author's comprehension and commitment to the natural world into striking contrast. The natural world is everything, in Ghosh's view. “included everything not formed by human intention.” (142) and it is self-sustaining, as for example, the fish “scrape off the diatoms and other edible matter attached to each grain of sand” (142). In addition to this, the author investigates a variety of myths, stories, anecdotes, and beliefs that are popular in the layman's area. At the same time, he has developed an interest in a variety of historical facts and scientific hypotheses, which together comprise the intellectual discourse of nature and habitation.

Ghosh has amassed a significant amount of information on how man has wreaked havoc on the environment. For instance, during the Khmer Rouge uprising in Laos, the rebel troops hunted and slaughtered dolphins in order to harvest oil, which they then used to fuel their cars (305). As he explains in the novel's epilogue, he has also investigated the past and discovered that Money S' Daniel desired to establish a new civilization in this location in which there would be no exploitation. He did this so that the people of this location would not be exploited. Ghosh has made it his mission to investigate the lives of many environmentalists who have contributed to preserving the natural world. They include individuals such as Mr. Paddington, who voiced opposition to establishing a port at Matla; nonetheless, Lord Canning

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chose to disregard his advice. As a direct consequence of this, a severe storm in the year 1871 wiped away the port (286-87).

Piya Roy, also known as Piyoli Roy, is a fictional creation of Ghosh that depicts a woman who has committed her whole life to the investigation and protection of the natural world. Ironically, eco-feminists in this day and age hold the belief that a woman, not a man, is a better steward of environment than either of the sexes combined. “Women have been associated with nature, the material, the emotional, and the particular, while men have been associated with culture, the nonmaterial, the rational, and the abstract” (Davion 9). The support for this stand is found in early human societies. “Eco-feminists have claimed that archaeological research reveals that such early societies were ecological, equal and matriarchal” (Gimbutas in Derek 21).

There is also the supporting notion of 'gaia,' which refers to the earth goddess from Greek mythology. This concept was unearthed to fit in with the ecological perspective of the planet as an organism that can sustain itself. In India, where this practise is common, the first-morning Puranic mantra that is supposed to be sung after getting out of bed refers to the soil goddess. Therefore, Derek concludes that "The concept of an Earth goddess is nearly universal and certainly ancient. Egyptian, Greek, Indian and Jewish traditions, to name but a few, provide us with female Earth deities" (74).

There is an engaging conversation taking place between Kanai and Piya over the topic of the conservation of potentially harmful creatures like tigers. While Kanai is a leftist who blames the Western "patrons" for disregarding the human cost that goes into protecting wildlife with the aid of Indian accomplices like him, Piya favours keeping the animals in their natural habitat. Kanai is a leftist who blames the Western "patrons" for disregarding the human cost that goes into protecting wildlife with the assistance of Indian accomplices like him. She claims that the natural world had it planned out that way:

> Just suppose we crossed that imaginary line that presents us from deciding that no other species matters except ourselves. What will be left then? Aren't we alone enough in the universe? Moreover, do you think it will stop at that? Once we decide we can kill off other species, it will be people next – precisely

> the kind of people you are thinking of people who're poor and unnoticed. (301).

This hypothesis is consistent with the postcolonial paradigm shift from the exploitation caused by colonisers to the exploitation committed against the oppressed in indigenously controlled communities. She confides in Kanai the following information regarding the challenges that accompany initiating programmes to investigate and protect natural areas: "Easy?' There was a parched weariness in Piya's voice now. 'Kanai, tell me, do you see anything easy about what I do? Look at me: I have no home, no money and no prospects. My friends are thousands of kilometers away and I get to see them maybe once a year, if I'm lucky. And that's the least of it. On top of that is the knowledge that what I'm doing is more or less futile" (302).

It is necessary to add to this picture the reality that government indifference and corrupt practises are the primary causes of the deterioration of the eco-system. When Piya submits her application for authorization to examine the waterways of the Sundarbans as part of her research study, she is required to have an official guard accompany and accompany her at all times. Ironically, it is the security guard who, in collusion with the boatman, whom she is again compelled to hire much against her will, swindles her and even takes her camera at the conclusion of the workday. They do this in collaboration with one other. As was evident from their behaviour, they were also capable of causing her physical damage; however, thanks to Fokir's timely intervention, this catastrophe was avoided.

Before we get into the most important challenge that the people of the Sundarbans are up against, let's take a moment to discuss some important points that were raised by Arne Naess, who is considered to be the "deep ecology" intellectual guru. According to Naess, the well-being and flourishing of human and non-human life on planet earth has value in itself, and secondly, this value is independent of the usefulness of the nonhuman world for human purposes. In other words, the value that Naess ascribes to the well-being and flourishing of human and non-human life on planet earth is intrinsic. However, the continuation of human existence and cultural development is not incompatible with a world with a significantly reduced human population. (Naess's sessions: 68). This observation immediately sets the interest of humanity against the interest of the non-human world, as what we witness is a

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decrease in the number of non-humans while there is an increase in the population of humans. This human-nonhuman hierarchy in inter-species reasoning is connected to other similar dichotomies, such as civilization and barbarism, as well as culture and nature, and it is truly intractable.

While environmentalists have their own perspective on how nature should be preserved, migratory populations are fighting for the right to continue their lives. The government's stand is this: "This island has to be saved for its trees, it has to be saved for its animals, it is a part of a reserve forest, it belongs to a project to save tigers, which is paid for by people from all around the world."

The postcolonialists argue that when the colonisers took over places that were inhabited by artless and simple individuals who lived in close proximity with nature, such as in the settler colonies of America and Australia, they saw the indigenous people as being not much better than animals. In light of this, there is no way to know whether these early settlers had good intentions when they tried to safeguard the creatures. Huggan and Tiffin, two critics, make the following statement while citing Robert Cribb on the topic of the legislation that the Dutch settlers in Australia enacted: "The creation of national parks and the protection of endangered species have both excluded indigenous peoples from regions they have occupied and managed for centuries and have hampered them from using natural resources as an economic base from which to seek modernity' – a modernity into which European incursion had already propelled them" (Huggan and Tiffin 187).

Here, in the setting of the Sundarbans, Kusum articulates before Nirmal the migrant community's response to the 'project tiger,' which also tackles the sensitive question of the hypothetical right of the animal world to exist about the requirements of human existence:

> "Every day, sitting here, with hunger gnawing at our bellies, we would listen to these words repeatedly. Who are these people, I wondered, who love animals so much that they are willing to kill us for them? Do they know what is being done in their names? Where do they live, these people, do they have children, mothers, fathers? As I thought of these things, it seemed to me that this whole world had become a place of animals, and our fault. Our crime was

that we were just human beings, trying to live as human beings always have, from the water and the soil" (261-2).

For the landless people, the tiger becomes a symbol of the state, which wants to discipline them in the tiger's name. This is true even when Ghosh investigates the many ideas that J. Feurer has proposed on how the tigers became maneaters (240).

When Piya discovers the dead body of a dolphin at the conclusion of the book, the circumstantial evidence and Fokir's testimony suggest that the irresponsible official guards were responsible for the animal's death: "…it was probably some kind of official boat, used by uniformed personnel – maybe from the coastguard or the police or even the Forest Department. It had one speeding down the channel, earlier in the day, and the inexperienced calf had been slow to move out of its way" (346).

Piya and Fokir's marriage, which took place at the same time that a tremendous storm hit the area, was a significant event that occurred at the same time that a powerful note was heard. This event occurred as a result of nature triumphing over the human division of society based on class. They had no choice but to huddle together for protection on the thick limb of the tree. She puts her arms around the tree, and Fokir, who is seated behind her, does the same. Both of them are then secured to the tree with an old sari that belonged to Moyna. "She could feel the bones of his cheeks as if they had been superimposed upon her own; it was as if the storm had given them what life could not; it had fused them together and made them one" (390). In general, Ghosh provides an approach that is fair and equitable to the many different problems involved in preserving the ecological balance.

In her work "The Inheritance of Loss" (2006), another renowned author and winner of the Booker Prize, Kiran Desai, focuses on the geographical aspect of the setting, which is an artistic decoration, also serves as an associated metaphor of home. Suppose the awareness of one's residence is located at a more profound level in the book. In that case, the awareness of one's natural environment is experienced at a more superficial level, on the level of an associated motif. Desai's ecological leanings, which she has acquired from her mother Anita Desai, who is a well-known author, can be seen in the idealistic description she gives of the hill station, which is in the style of a picture of a pastoral setting. In Fire on the Mountain, Nanda Kaul is the one who blends in with the environment; meanwhile, in The Inheritance of

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Loss, it is the home that blends in with the surroundings: 'When she looked back, the house was gone; when she climbed the steps back to the veranda, the garden vanished. […] The gray had permeated inside, as well, settling on the silverware, nosing the corners, turning the mirror in the passageway to cloud' (2).

Those who have a passion for nature will find a delicious feast waiting for them at the foot of Kanchenjunga in the form of exotic features of nature, including flora, animals, and luxuriant vegetation. Even the seclusion of the people who live on Cho Oyu has been characterised in terms of the huge squid that has been observed there on extremely infrequent occasions: "No human had ever seen an adult giant squid alive, and though they had eyes as big as apples to scope the dark of the ocean, theirs was a solitude so profound they might never encounter another of their tribe" (2). The symbolic importance of the natural world's animal inhabitants may be discovered, as a matter of course, in the innumerable narratives that have been generated throughout all eras and locations. In the portion of the Cho Oyu that the rustic chef and the other servants are in charge of, one thing that sticks out is how the human and animal worlds are able to coexist peacefully with one another. A bowl of sweets and a saucer of milk are placed in the pit by the cook in an effort to appease a pair of black cobras that have made their home there. The namelessness of the archetypical chef signifies that he maintains a lifestyle that is in tune with nature and the belief that "The natural world exists in its own right and other beings have a will, a way of their own and their own stories" (Drengson 20).

Nevertheless, much like in The Hungry Tide, we encounter conflict in this book as well. Gyan, a Gurkha, finds himself lured to the movement of the ethnic Nepalese Gurkha people who are fighting for the creation of Gurkhaland, their homeland, which would be carved out of West Bengal. It is a well-established reality that issues pertaining to the environment and social issues, such as housing and agricultural land, are inextricably linked. There is a concern over environmental fairness, and this issue "gives these positions a clear affinity with environmental justice movements that protest the common association of acute environmental degradation and pollution with poverty" (Gerard 20).

As Sai comes to know Gyan, her Nepalese-born instructor who lives in the impoverished neighbourhood of Bong Busti, she begins to develop feelings for him. They are brought together by nature, which is able to transcend cultural borders, much as it did for Ammu and

Velutha in Arundhati Roy's novel, The God of Small Things. They share stories with one another about their lives and the lives of their families while sitting in front of the picturesque background of the Delo lake or on the banks of the Teesta river. The natural world draws them closer together, but the cultural politics of their own countries drive a wedge between them. The campaign for Gorkhaland is one manifestation of the Indian Nepalese population's rising dissatisfaction. Gyan becomes a member of this movement and is then subjected to brainwashing, which results in him distancing himself from Sai and even speaking harshly about her. The two are engaged in a vicious argument with one another. Gyan prioritises his geo-ethnic identity above all other aspects of his life. At Cho Oyu, he insults his beloved and makes fun of "that fussy pair" by making fun of their "false English accent" and "powdered faces." He now views them with contempt since they have invaded his native nation. Nevertheless, nature does not invite any living thing to stay with her on a permanent basis. “Even if a group has been here for several generations, the fact remains that it is true so far as the recorded history goes. One cannot make history a ground for claiming a piece of land in these postmodern times when any identity, leave aside the one based on settlement, is fluid and changeable” (Batra 170).

Voices in the Valley, written by Suravi Sharma Kumar and published in 2012, is a novel that features prominently the geography, climate, flora, and wildlife of the state of Assam, and as a result, it is replete with ecological undertones. In addition to this, there is a strong emphasis placed on the traditions, norms, taboos, etc., of the society that coexists peacefully with its natural surroundings. At least at the beginning of the book, the author paints lovely pictures with their words, as can be seen in the following examples:

> Millie would observe the kingfisher sitting still on twigs in order to snap up a tiny fish or a tadpole camouflaged in sheets of algae. Dazzling white, the egrets would wade all over the paddy beds with their necks moving back and forth. At a distance from Borkuiiagaon, the Burha Luit [Bramhaputra] flowed in melodic ripples sounding like the clinking of bangles on a bride’s heavily ornamented wrists. (42).

The following is an example of the writer deciphering the language of fish through the reading of the leaves: “Some trees were covered by vines, some stood bare, some bore leaves

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pointed like a singi fish, some spindle-shaped like the kuhi fish, some tiny like the puna fish" (68). Even at the most microscopic level, the fight in nature may be seen: "Red weaver ants stitched up the leaves of a guava sapling in a corner into enclosures for homes. Drones and bees attacked a thick wasp, that had intruded into their hive, engulfing it in a ball of bees, exterminating it for its audacity" (71).

Some of the images are indeed fresh, as for example, "The reddened river at a distance flowed trembling with the boats and ferries sailing on it butterflied to their reflections" (116) or "…yards away from the highway lounged a green pond with thick lining of moss and with turtles who looked like upturned saucers floating on the water" (38). However, this focus on ecological aspect is not retained throughout the narrative. After some eighty pages, the description takes the form of journalistic report and the issues covered are also of socio-political interest rather than of ecological interest.

Because of the ecological interest they possess, a few more books may be briefly addressed here. Aruni Kashyap has just published a book entitled The House with the Thousand Stories (2013), which is set in the state of Assam and focuses on the problem of insurgency in that state. The natural world is described at length, yet it plays just a supporting role in the story. She describes the smell of the ground, the river Bramhaputra, the animals, the insects, and other things with the primary purpose of painting a mental image for the reader. The title of V. Sudarshan's novel Adrift, which translates to "A Story of Survival at Sea," accurately describes the book's narrative, which is a riveting account of a tourist couple who were stranded at sea with the crew. The Andaman and Nicobar Islands, known for their untouched natural beauty, serve as a background. The author S.S. Kumar's novel Frozen Waves utilises the Sundarbans region as the setting for the suspenseful events that transpire throughout the story.

As a result, nature is receiving a growing amount of attention in modern Indian literature written in English. Having said that, this focal point is more in the nature of a background. It is still a rather uncommon occurrence for a work of fiction to tackle environmental problems in a serious manner, as Amitav Ghosh has done in his novel The Hungry Tide. Literature, in its capacity as a form of textual representation, does indeed make a contribution to the formation of both culture and nature. Accepting the presence of nature in fact, apart from any

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textualization of it, is the current obstacle. It is essential to comprehend that this phenomena is not unidirectional in nature. In point of fact, the feeling is reciprocal "of physical environment (both natural and human built) shaping in some measure the cultures that in some measure continually refashion it" (Buell 2001: 6). There needs to be some kind of middle ground solution that can accommodate the competing needs of both parties.

> Wall Derek suggests the remedy: Economic systems should be infinitely sustainable, cyclical in nature and able to recycle energy and resource inputs. Rather than being based on quantitative measures of gross national product, their goals should be ecologically centred and qualitative. Above all, preservation of, and interaction with nature are vital. The reduction of human wants and the abolition of degrading, alienating work are also sought. Social justice and the creation of a sense of community are equally important; the end goal of a sustainable economy may in a sense be the abolition of economics as a category separate from other areas of life" (Derek 118).

We must not forget that a portion of ecologists came to the late conclusion that the transformation of the economy by itself is insufficient, and that in place of materialism, we ought to be adhering to a sort of "Green spirituality." This is an important point that must not be forgotten (Derek 182). In point of fact, this has been the motto that has been upheld by the traditional culture of India. But in order for our generation to take the reins now, it is not just the scientists, legislators, and literary experts, but all of mankind as a whole that has to awaken in order to avert the disaster that is pounding on our front door.

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