

# **Eco-Criticism in *The God of Small Things* (1997) written by Arundhati Roy and *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006) written by Kiran Desai**

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## **1.INTRODUCTION**

The relationship between nature and literature is unique. It is observed that nature remains chief source of inspiration for many great writers. Today, the intimate relationship between the natural and social world is being analyzed and emphasized in all departments of knowledge and development. Moreover, the 20<sup>th</sup> century witnesses the development of critical response towards environment. At the result, the term ecocriticism comes in currency. Interest in the study of nature writing and in reading literature with a focus on “green” issues grew through the 1980’s and by the early 1990’s ecocriticism has emerged as a recognizable discipline within the literature departments of the American Universities. Ecocriticism has captured the attention of many scholars over the last three decades. Ecocriticism by and large is concerned with relationship between humans and the landscape. Early theories in literary studies focus on issues of class, race, gender, region as important criteria of critical analysis. The late twentieth century has woken up to a new threat: ecological disaster. Ecocriticism is the result of this new consciousness, that very soon, there will be nothing beautiful in nature to discourse about unless we are careful.

## **2.ECOCRITICISM: AN OVERVIEW**

- Ecocriticism emerged as a study of the relationship between literature and the natural environment in the mid-1990. Ecocriticism is a term derived from Greek oikos and kritic. “Oikos” means “household”, a nexus of humans, nature and the spirit. “Kritic” means judge, “the arbiter of taste who wants the house kept in good order” in all regards.
- Ecocriticism is the study of literature and environment from an interdisciplinary point of view where all sciences come together to analyses the environment and arrive at possible solution for the correction of the contemporary environmental situation.

Cheryll Glotfelty is the founder of Ecocritics in the United State of America. According to her, “Ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment.” Just as feminist criticism examines language and literature from a gender conscious perspective, and Marxist criticism brings an awareness of modes of production and economic class to its reading of texts, ecocriticism takes an earth-centered approach to literary studies.

## **3.THE DEVELOPMENT OF ECOCRITICISM**

The study of literature’s relationship to the physical world has been with us, in the domain of the pastoral tradition for a long time. In the 1970’s the relationship between literature and environment emerged as a topic of serious and widespread interest among writers and scholars. The writing of Joseph Meeker, William

Rueckert, and Neil Evernden are the seminal works of ecocriticism. Ecocriticism had its official beginning as a discipline in the 1990's. The writing of Thoreau and Emerson fall into the ecocritical mood. Thoreau's Journal marks the obvious beginning point of this psychological tradition in American nature writing.

The notion that literature is a combination of nonhuman and human contexts, nature and culture found a few critical proponents during the 1970's and 1980's. The late nineteenth century and early twentieth century witnessed the transfer of the old machine garden conflict into the immediate present, over wilderness, old growth forests, pollution and spreading urban blight. The works of writers like Mary Austin, Gary Snyder, Barry Lopez, Terry Tempest Williams kept such issues at the forefront of the publications during these years. Peter Barry's Beginning Theory describes following points to study literary work as ecocritical mode of analysis.

- It is a re-read major literary works from an eco-centric perspective, with particular attention to the representation of the natural world.
- The study allows a range of eco-centric concepts, using them of things other than the natural world - concepts such as growth and energy, balance and imbalance, symbiosis and mutuality, and sustainable or unsustainable uses of energy and resources.
- It examines canonical emphasis to writers who foreground nature as a major part of their subject matter, such as the American transcendentalists, the British Romantics, the poetry of John Clare, the work of Thomas Hardy and the Georgian poets of the early twentieth century.
- It helps to study literary-critical practice by placing a new emphasis on relevant 'factual' writing, especially reflective topographical material such as essays, travel writing, memoirs, and regional literature.

#### 4. WORKS OF ARUNDHATI ROY, KIRAN DESAI AND ECO-CRITICISM

Arundhati Roy, Kiran Desai are the major contemporary Writers in English and winner of many prestigious prizes and his works have been analyzed as illustrations of postmodern, postcolonial writing. But, a close reading of their novels reveals a number of environmental concerns in almost all his works. Both writers beautifully share their real-life experience and knowledge of history and interconnects nature in his writing. Their work include:

WORK OF ARUNDHATI ROY: *An Atlas of Impossible Longing* (2008), *The Folded Earth* (2011), *Sleeping on Jupiter* (2015), *All the Lives We Never Lived* (2018), *The Earthspinner* (2021). Environment is one of the prominent themes in both her novels *The God of Small Things* (1997) and *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2017).

WORK OF KIRAN DESAI: Desai's *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* (1998), *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006). *Second novel of Kiran Desai is focusing on landscape as dominant character.*

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The natural beauty of Mount Kanchenjunga with its wizard phosphorescence is described in the beginning of the novel. The house is situated at a place from where the beautiful treasure of nature can be easily enjoyed the house members, named, retired judge with his orphaned granddaughter named Sai, a servant and a dog Mutt. The rooms are spacious in the old manner of wealth Windows placed for snow views (*The God of Small Things* and *The Inheritance of Loss*, 6-7). Nature has blessed every one of the houses. But opposite to this peaceful and beautiful atmosphere, the writer of the novel has portrayed the efforts of those purposefully wish to breakdown the bonding of man and nature. Only aim behind this is to establish supremacy by destroying the peace and beauty of the nature. They have used forest for the raw material purpose and made it on the foot in

leather jackets form the black market of the Kathmandu *The God of Small Things* and *The Inheritance of Loss*, 4). They are the young boys who have been demanding for a separate Gorkhaland. They used to disturb the silence of nature by firing the bullets. Their job is to terrorize people and rob their wealth, especially their guns. Thus, terrorist activities, motivated by political reasons, easily turn heaven like nature into a hellish experience Desai like an eco-critic maintains here:

“Nature really exists out there beyond ourselves, not needing to be ionized as a concept by enclosure within knowing inverted commas but actually present as an entity which affects us, and which we can affect, perhaps fatally, if we mistreat it” (Peter Barry, 252).

The relation between man and nature is a matter of faith. The more a man rely on the nature, the better is his realization of its blessing. It also becomes synonymous to God, provided one tries to understand its mystery. When the SDO looks at the beautiful flowering creeper in the garden of the judge, he says: Beautiful Blossoms, Justice Sahib. If you see such a sight, you will know there is a God. Though a man of police, he loves such a beautiful creation of nature and looks after his plants exactly as if they were babies (*The God of Small Things* and *The Inheritance of Loss* 226). If a modern man would like to avoid the emerging chaos from his life, he has to make the efforts to reestablish his bonding, and cohesion with the nature (cited in Bhattacharjee (2018).

## 5.CONCLUSION

Nature is the dominant factor in the writings of Arundhati Roy and Kiran Desai because of the interaction between author and place, characters and place. Landscape by definition includes the non-human elements of place- rocks, soil, trees, plants, rivers, animals, air-as well as human perceptions and modifications. Kiran Desai has covered almost all the different concepts and definitions that have been put forth by various critics of ecocriticism. Her novel is rich with eco-critical references and among the recent fictions can be most aptly given an eco-critical reading. Arundhati Roy raises important questions engulfing the society in general and environment in particular. Through both her novels, she creates a clear picture of the destruction of environment and several other environment-related issues in the minds of her readers.

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