

## **CHANGING PERSPECTIVES OF THE WORD 'ECOLOGY' FROM EIGHTEENTH TO TWENTIETH CENTURY**

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### ***Abstract***

*Ecological center literature is introduced as Eco-poetics, Green Studies, Literary Ecology, Ecological centre Literature or Environmental Literature, Green Theory and so on. It is certainly newly coined term but the spirit behind it is ages old. From early nineteenth century nature poetry had dominated the literary scene. The application of ecology and ecological concepts to the study of literature is named as ecocriticism. Ecocriticism is ecology and environmental based term. The term ecology was coined by the German Zoologist Ernest Haeckel in 1869. Joseph Meeker introduced the term Literary Ecology in 1972. Another American scholar William Rueckert has coined the term Ecocriticism from the two words ecology and criticism in his essay 'Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in eco-criticism'. The present paper is an attempt to show the changing perspectives of the word ecology from eighteenth to twentieth century regarding to ten selected representative poets of those centuries.*

**Keywords:** *Ecology, Changing nature from Eighteenth to Twentieth century Poetry.*

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### Introduction:

Fourth world literature and culture demand some attention on environmental conscious literature. The focus is on nature in literature is perceivable in the literary theory known as ecological concern literature or ecocriticism. Ecological centre literature is introduced as Eco-poetics, Green Studies, and Literary Ecology, Ecological centre or Environmental Literature, Green Theory and so on. From early nineteenth century nature poetry had dominated the literary scene. The application of ecology and ecological concepts to the study of literature is named as ecocriticism. Ecocriticism is ecology and environmental based term. The term ecology was coined by the German Zoologist Ernest Haeckel in 1869. Joseph Meeker introduced the term Literary Ecology in 1972. Another American scholar William Rueckert has coined the term Ecocriticism from the two words ecology and criticism in his essay 'Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Eco-criticism'. Though Ecocriticism as a literary theory is of recent origin, its elements are found in works of several poets in the earlier period. These poets attempted to rediscover the mystery and wonder of the world and trying to establish a meaningful relationship between literature and nature. Nature remained major source of their inspiration. This paper presents the changing scenario of the word ecology in the works of ten selected representative poets from eighteenth to twentieth century. These are Thomas Gray, William Blake, Wordsworth, Tennyson, Jayant Mahapatra, Robert Frost D. H. Lawrence, W. B. Yeats, Sylvia Plath and Seamus Heaney. Their approach to nature is different, but they wanted to establish harmonious relationship between literature and nature.

- **Thomas Gray's approach to nature in 'Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard':**

Thomas Gray is considered the second most important representative poet of the eighteenth century. He presents nature as a mirror of life from philosophical perspective in his poem 'Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard' published in 1751. He presents nature as a mirror of life from philosophical perspectives. 'Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard' is written after the death of his close friend Richard West. An elegy is a poem which laments the dead. It mourns the death not of great or famous people but common men. The poet sees a country churchyard at sunset which impels him to meditate on the nature of human mortality. The first three stanzas are remarkable for their vivid imagery. The atmosphere of evening has been created with such pictures as the herd winding slowly over the lea, the ploughman returning home with a weary step, the landscape fading, the beetle flying round and round, the owl occasionally crying and complaining to the moon. It gives retrospective pictures of the occupations and innocent joys of the life of the dead men. He builds up an atmosphere of evening.

The curfew tolls the knell of parting day,  
The lowing herd wind slowly o'er the lea,  
The plowman homeward plods his weary way,  
And leaves the world to darkness and to me (Gray,1-4)

He writes:

Full many a gem of purest ray serene  
The dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear:  
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,  
And waste its sweetness on the desert air. (Gray, 53-56)

Many gems exquisitely beautiful and exceptionally bright lie hidden in the dark depths of the bottomless ocean. Many beautiful flowers bloom in the wilderness where nobody can either see their blushing charm or smell their sweet fragrance. The sights and sounds describe in the stanzas create a rural atmosphere and suggest that interest in nature.

- **William Blake's approach to nature in his 'The Tyger' and 'The Lamb':**

Blake portrayed the mystery of nature. Blake engraved designs to illustrate his poems. The same symbolic qualities are evident in his illustrations also. He brings out innocence nature in 'The Lamb' and cruelty that is experienced through 'The Tyger'. He writes poems like 'The Tyger' and 'The Lamb' in which he presents the conventional idea that nature like a work of art. Nature must in some way contain a reflection of its creator. The tiger is beautiful yet also horrific animal. Blake thinks that what kind of a God. He would design such a terrifying beast as the tiger. He writes:

Tyger! Tyger! burning bright  
In the forests of the night,  
What immortal hand or eye  
Could frame thy fearful symmetry? ( Blake, 1-4)

The tiger's image is the symbol of experience. Blake raises the question of who could make such a creature as the tiger or who would perform this act. Blake admires the creator as well as nature. The things which create in nature are really unique. Blake who was really impressed and thinks it should not compare.

Blake presents both the aspects of nature. A tiger and a lamb have been created by the same God. It also invites two different views such as experience and innocence which represented here and in the poem 'The Lamb' and 'The Tyger'. It includes unanswered questions. The poet leaves us to awe at the complexity of creation.

In 'The Lamb' speaker, a child asks the lamb about its origins. It is the symbol of innocence.

Little Lamb who made thee  
Dost thou know who made thee  
Give thee life and bid thee feed.(Blake,1-3)

Nature creates two different powers. A tiger and a lamb have been created by the same God. It also invites a contrast between the perspectives of experience and innocence represented in these poems.. Both poems are a good illustration of how Blake himself stands somewhere outside perspectives of innocence and experience he projects. Tiger and the lamb both creatures are the creation of the God and both are important element. Here poet is really surprised and praised to creator. Who made two different creatures?

- **Wordsworth's approach to nature in 'Lines written a few miles above Tintern Abbey':**

In the nineteenth century following the Romantic Movement William Wordsworth chooses nature as the backdrop of his poetry. He is called the pioneer or worshipper of nature poetry. Wordsworth looks at nature from different perspective. Nature becomes a central issue in his poetry. He felt that Nature as a true inspirer; the guide and friend to human. For Wordsworth, Nature was his preacher and she became his guide and nurse.

'Lines written a few miles above Tintern Abbey' is considered to be one of the greatest romantic poems in English literature. Wordsworth's earlier visit to the place that marked his profound interest in nature. It also brings out the sublime delight that the poet finds on discovering the presence of the same spirit in both man and nature for Wordsworth, Nature is not only remained simply a source of 'aching joys' and 'dizzy raptures' but rose above the purely sensual level to give him moral and spiritual strength as well. At the age of twenty three; Wordsworth had visited the desolate Abbey alone. In 1798 he returned to the same place with his beloved sister, who was a year younger. His earlier visit to the place that marked a profound interest and close bond with Nature:

Five years have past; five summers, with the length  
of five long winters! and again I hear (Wordsworth,1-2)

Wordsworth shows that Nature as a strong source of moral inspiration in:

...-Feelings too  
Of unremembered pleasure: such, perhaps  
As have no slight or trivial influence...  
His little, nameless, unremembered, acts  
Of kindness and of love (Wordsworth, 31-36)

In The fourth stanza Wordsworth shows interest in nature from the playful attitude of a child to the passionate, as a child he had only the sense of perception of the beauty of nature. Nature didn't tempt his mind. So he could not enjoy the pleasure and happiness offered by nature. He was filled with fear than joy. It says in the lines:

when like a roe

I bounded o'er the mountains, by the sides  
 Of the deep rivers, and the lonely stream,  
 Wherever nature led more like a man  
 Flying from something that he dreads than one  
 Who sought the things he loved. (Wordsworth, 69-74)

In his youth he was captivated by the beauty of nature and the colors and forms of nature and lastly, a perception of Nature as a powerful moral force closely linked with the human spirit as well as with God show in the lines:

The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,  
 The guide; the guardian of my heart, and soul  
 Of all my moral being. ((Wordsworth,111-113)

Wordsworth feels a deeper and more intelligent relationship with nature:

And I have felt  
 A presence that disturbs me with the joy  
 Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime  
 Of something far more deeply interfused... ((Wordsworth,95-97)

Wordsworth approach to nature is, nature brought him solace, comfort a sedateness of mind and spiritual calm and worshipping devotedly at the shrine of nature. Finally he looked into the life of things and had mystical vision of the oneness of man and nature. He mainly observes the more disciplining elements in nature and more placid and tranquil aspects of nature.

- **Tennyson's Approach to Nature in 'Break, Break, Break':**

Nature is always present in literature by literary artists in their own way. Tennyson is the most representative poet of Victorian age. Tennyson's approach to nature is intellectual rather than emotional like that of Wordsworth. Tennyson never sees Nature without thinking of man. Words worth loved solitary communion with Nature Tennyson did not forget man while painting a scene of Nature. He uses nature elements for expressing joy and sorrows of his men and women. Nature to Tennyson is always a background for

reflecting some human emotions. He paints various aspects of nature to show mood of joy, sorrow, languor, love etc.

His short simple lyrical poem 'Break, Break, Break' is the best illustration the poet is standing on a beach and watching the waves constantly dashing against the grey stone. His heart is heavy with deep sorrow over his friend's death and the sight in front of him rouses a sense of loss over what has happened in Victorian period he writes:

Break, Break, break,  
On thy cold grey stones, O Sea!  
And I would that my tongue could utter  
The thought that arise in me. (Tennyson, 1-4)

He uses nature images for presenting the Victorian values and loss of morality in Victorian period. He observes the waves dashing against the rocks. The sea seems to be in endless motion. This continuity in nature stands in clear contrast to the cruel finality of death and the passage of time. And by showing the endless crashing of the waves on the rocks he seems to stress and the brevity of human life. There is a shade of romantic way in the poet's expression of a sense of loss in:

O sea!  
But the tender grace of a day that is dead  
Will never come back to me. (Tennyson, 14-16)

The poet misses the tender grace of a day that is gone forever and will never come back to him. He draws a contrast human life and human institutions with nature and her phenomena. Human life is transitory and the nature is lasting. Nature repeats itself but human joy never returns. He remembers the happy day of his friend's company and feels sorry for that those blessed movements will return no more.

- **Jayant Mahapatra's approach to nature in 'Dawn At Puri'**

In 'Dawn at Puri' we see the nature's realistic presentation from Indian landscape. Jayant Mahapatra is the best known Indian English poet. He is one the

representative poet who is deeply rooted in Indian culture and ethos with which he is emotionally attached as a poet. In 'Dawn at Puri' J. Mahapatra narrates the Orriyan landscape, specially the holy city of Puri. Here he regrets over the irrational activity of human spoiled the holy nature. Puri as a central place for the four 'Dhams' or sacred cities Lord Jagganath is the main deity in Puri who is in the form of lord Vishnu. In 'Dawn at Puri' the poet attacks on the innocence of the people who always like to wash their sinful body on the sacred land Puri. Puri is the place which is the gateway heaven. The Indians believe that the devotees are diverting from the hell to purgatory and it opens the door of paradise. So the poet writes:

Endless crow noises  
A skull an the holy sands  
Tilts its empty country toward hunger  
White-clad widowed women  
Past the centers of their lives  
Are waiting to enter the Great temple (Mahapatra, 1-6)

We always see the long waiting queue in front of the temple. The holy sand is the long beach which spoiled with the funeral pyres goon burning. In this poem the way Mahapatra portrays the events and incidents shows us that he dislikes of what is going on under the name of tradition and practices we see the life lies like at Puri, 'A mass of crouched faces without names' (12). We also see how people are trapped faith as expressed in 'Caught in a net'. He also shows the harsh reality that the shells on the sand are ruined, he writes in the words 'Ruined, leprous shells leaning against one another'(11), the word 'leprous' is suggestive of decadence and infirmity. Here we see his ardent love for the land. The poem evokes sense of loss, loss of identity, anonymity, death, disease and infirmity. He brings out realistic presentation of the loss of the natural things from Indian landscape.

- **Robert frost approach to Nature in 'After Apple- Picking'**

Robert frost is known as one of the foremost American poets of the twentieth century. His subjects and settings are usually the landscape and folk of New England. He was once

considered a simple farmer poet. His poetry is imbued with a simple woodland philosophy. Robert frost does not idealize or romanticize nature; he presents the truth about her. Frost writes from personal experience of those activities in nature which he himself has observed and experienced Realism is a marked feature of frost's nature poetry.

Frost is not concerned with nature as such; he is more concerned with the common human activity that goes in her lap as mowing, apple-picking and other farming activity. 'After Apple-Picking' is a great nature lyric. As a farmer poet he is giving an account of a simple account of a simple pastoral activity of apple picking: I am done with apple- picking now'.

(6) As a speaker he feels that all these activities are related with the cycle of seasons. The apple picker feels very much a part of seasonal change autumn harvest turning towards winter, his work ending in sleep, his life ending in death.

Essence of winter sleep is on the night

The scent of apples: I am drowsing off (Frost-7-8)

The apple picker is not sure whether his sleep is ordinary human sleep or the long winter hibernation of the creatures of nature, like the wood chuck

The woodchuck could say whether it's like his

Long sleep, as I describe it's coming on,

Or just some human sleep. (Frost40-42)

The woodchuck has gone into hibernation; he reflects on his own dreams on the sleep that is approaching 'whatever sleep it is'. In life in death, the dream of labor and activity is necessary to sustain life. Everyday activity he seeks to study man in relation to his physical environment, and to the lower creatures that live within her.

- **Sylvia Plath's Approach to nature in 'Tulips'**

She uses the nature as a vehicle for self confession. Her poem 'Tulips' was about a bouquet of Tulips which she received as she recovered from an appendectomy in the

hospital. Its subject is relatively simple a woman, recovering from a procedure in a hospital, receives a bouquet of Tulips that affront her with their glaring color and vividness.

Plath's thinks hates those hideous tulips, she feels like they are watching her, stealing her air, Plath took nature as an outlet of her inner being and her multifaceted personality. She expected no sympathy from the illogical forces of nature, which are hostile to man she writes

The tulips are too red in the first place, they hurt me.(Sylvia,36)

Plath who was alone in the hospital room, but the tulips shares her space. Watching her and eating up she feels caught between the tulips and the window behind her. She lost her face while surrounded by the flowers and the sun .Nature mirrors her depression but also offers a thick blackest. Images and allusions to nature permeate Plath's poetry. She often evokes the sea and the fields to great effect. The sea is usually associated with her father; it is powerful, unpredictable, mesmerizing, and dangerous.

Nature is also manifested in the bright red tulips which jolt the listless Plath from her post-operation stupor, insisting that she return to the world of the living. Here, nature is a provoker, an instigator - it does not want her to give up. Nature is a ubiquitous theme in Plath's work; it is a potent force that is sometimes unpredictable, but usually works to encourage her creative output.

A majority of the interpretations and discussions concerning Plath tend to focus on the more sensational aspects of her life, most notably her untimely death. While these aspects are entirely relevant, her poems also show the complexities of life through objective and beautiful expression through nature. Throughout "Tulips," Plath presents a vivid perspective of emotional emptiness and strife, contrasting these two opposing forces, and effectively illustrating their impact through the personification of colors.

- **Lawrence's Approach to Nature in 'Snake'**

Lawrence approach to nature is to protective. He may be indicates that 'Live and Let Live' All living things have right to live in the surrounding. He writes,

I regretted it.

I thought how paltry, how vulgar, what a mean act!

I despised myself and the voice if my accursed human education.

(Lawrence, 64-66)

In 'Snake' composes the frightening experience of confronting a snake is beautifully described. He personifies a snake in his poem it deals with certain charm. The poem is modern and the natural undertones. Lawrence in the poem 'Snake' represents his pettiness after trying to harm a snake that enters his house. However in the post modern world there is neither hesitation nor repentance man simply plunders and depletes the natural resources.

In the 'Snake' the first part of the poem talks about the arrival and description of the snake the second part describes about the drinking from the water trough. In the third part the poet's feeling and his sudden desire to kill the snake. In final part we find the poet's remorse. Here we see the regrets for his foolish act of trying to kill the snake for a moment his emotions were different and he hated.

In the first part the poet's encounter with a snake is on hot day. It was there to drink water from the water trough when the poet came towards the carob tree its strange scent, saw the snake and had to stand and wait. He watches its movement and beauty. There is conflict in his mind. His inner voice provokes him by saying that if he was a man; he would have to 'finish him off'. But the poet admits that he liked the snake and he was truly afraid, and that he led the dangerous snake to go and feelings of honour that the snake sought his hospitality. He also thought that his educational voice alert him that snakes are poisonous, but didn't tell him that snake maintain the balance in nature. The poet's action shows that nature keeps harmony but man cannot.

- **W. B. Yeats's Approach to Nature in 'The Lake Isle of Innisfree'**

W. B. Yeats is the last modern poet of that era. His approach towards nature is different. He finds sublimity in nature and communes with nature. 'The Lake Isle of Innisfree' he expresses the idea that nature provides an inherently restorative place to which human beings can go to escape the chaos and corrupting influences of civilization.

'The Lake Isle of Innisfree' is his earlier lyric poems. It shows the poet's longing for the peace and tranquility of his boyhood haunt, Innisfree. 'The Lake Isle of Innisfree gives the experience of a life of simplicity in nature. It will bring peace to the troubled man Innisfree is the place where he finds solace, he writes that 'I shall have some peace there, for peace comes dropping slow' (5). It may be a symbol of his passed youth but now he is unable to return to in the 'real or 'physical world'. He is emotionally and spiritually communes with Innisfree. He emotionally can return again and again to the tranquility of Innisfree.

'The Lake Isle of Innisfree' Innisfree is an Island in Lough Gill, co sligo. In his young age he had enjoyed natural life in Sligo, Ireland. Yeats expresses his ardent desire to escape from London to the lap of nature in the island of Innisfree he writes:

I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree.

And a small cabin build there of clay and wattles made:

Nine bean-rows will I have 'there , a hive for the honey- bee.(Yeats 1-3)

Yeats was one who successfully bridged the gap between romantic tradition and the modernist literature. Yeats is the last modern poet who uses nature for expressing his personal problem and creating a general philosophy of life.

- **Seamus Heaney's approach to Nature in 'Digging'**

Seamus Heaney shows his lamentation on the loss of environmental diversity in 'Digging'. It represents ancestral background and nature. Heaney's family was expert in handling a spade when work in the farm. Farming is the major profession of them. Heaney, his father and his grandfather are involved in farming activity. He writes that his father dug with a spade and his grandfather dug turf and he himself is digging up his memories of the past with pen. We come to know that all the three generations is involved in digging activity. He writes:

My father, digging...  
 Stooping in rhythm through potato drills  
 Where he was digging ...  
 My grandfather cut more turf in a day (Heaney, 1-5)

This poem represents ancestral background and his view of nature. Heaney's family was experts in handling a spade when work in the farm. Heaney begins his poem introducing to us his pen.

Between my finger and my thumb  
 The squat pen rests: snug as a gun. (Heaney, 1-2)

It suggests that in his hand, the pen is a perfect, it show his interest for writing. He says that it rests in his hand 'snug as a gun. This quote gives that the pen is snug as a gun because it fits his hand and is powerful.

A young Heaney is looking down his father from his window to see his father was digging this second stanza is perfectly connected with the following one, in which we see he is looking back twenty years to the same place where his father was digging. Seamus Heaney continues describes his father worked till the fifth stanza, in which he introduces his grandfather who was a digger too:

By God, the old man could handle a spade  
 Just like his old man. (Heaney, 15-16)

The skill has been passed from father to son, so he admires for it. He shows his respect towards traditional profession and towards his father and grandfather. He also realizes that his work is writing and not digging:

But I've no spade to follow men like them (Heaney, 28)

He recognizes that he is not going to follow this traditional profession. A sense of loss engulfs for just a moment. Then he realizes although he won't become great digger but he has another skill in writing. He will try to become as a good writer as his father and grandfather were digger. He shows his lamentation on the loss of family's traditional profession. He says in the last line that he is continuing to digging in different manner. He

will dig with pen instead of spade. He changes his instrument change is one of important the aspect of ecological balance that is natural.

As a nature poet Heaney writes about tradition farming activity (near the country side) as well as his writing activity, he uses the image of the pen, it is replaced by a gun:

Between my finger and my thumb  
The squat pen rests. I'll dig with it.(Heaney, 29-31)

Now his pen becomes a metaphorical spade, which suggests that his pen is like his tool, as the spades were the tools of his father and grandfather. So he will continue with his work digging in his memories through writing. He is not given up this a tradition activity. He is continues dig this activity of digging only instrument change. Change is necessary for the development. This poem shows symbolises the changing face of Ireland, from a rural country to a modern Industrial nation. This is the most representative poems of him because in it we can see his most important features as a writer, he writes about everything that surrounds him which means Ireland, especially Northern Ireland and writing about his own family history.

Digging compares the poet's pen to the farmer's spade. It shows Heaney's early struggle to define himself as a poet. He evokes his deep emotional response towards the environment through digging his memories. He is very sensitive towards the nature.

### **Conclusion**

Early poets use nature as a source of reflection and described its beauty only. But now a day the beauty of nature destroy due to over use of natural sources. It proved really harmful for human survival. So all the new poets treat Nature as a living organism and it should be preserved. All these representative poets present the nature according to surrounding in which they lived and experienced. They indirectly create the awareness and interest about nature through their work of art in the whole world. The world literature mainly concerns about the ecology centre literature which brings out the awareness. Because conservation of nature has become the primary need of everyone. While studying the literature from eighteenth century to twentieth century we can understand the changing perspectives of the word ecology.

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