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Ecocriticism in Indian English poetry: Nature, Culture and Crisis

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Abstract
Ecocriticism, which is loosely described as the study of literature in relation to the physical world, has emerged as an indispensable critical tool of analyzing how texts encode, challenge or reproduce environmental imaginaries and environmental crisis (Glotfelty and Fromm). This discussion overlaps with the history of colonialism and postcolonialism, local cosmologies, and fast neoliberalism in the Indian context and Indian English poetry is a strong source of exploring such entanglements of nature, culture and ecological crisis. This essay analyzes the works of the selected Indian English poets such as Nissim Ezekiel, A. K. Ramanujan, Jayanta Mahapatra, Arun Kolakkar, Keki N. Daruwalla, Gieve Patel, Dilip Chitre, Mamang Dai and Temsula Ao based on the ecocritical approach. The study mainly relies on theoretical approaches formulated by William Rueckert, Lawrence Buell, Cheryl Glotfelty, Greg Garrard, Rob Nixon and postcolonial ecocritics and the role of their poetry in creating landscape as physical milieu and cultural memory, the negotiation of forces of urbanization and industrial modernity, and environmental injustice as a kind of slow violence. Through a qualitative textual analysis of a purposive sample of poems with a supporting simple thematic frequency counts, the paper identifies three prevailing patterns, which are sacralized nature and indigenous ecological wisdom; ecological estrangement in urban and industrial space; and expression of crisis as images of toxicity, waste, and injured nonhuman life. The paper claims that Indian English ecopoetry is not just a record of environmental crisis, but also re-conceptualizes ethical relationships between humans and the more-than-human world, as it mediates between the traditional cosmologies and new environmental justice discourses. It ends with recommending that Indian English poetry is a critical cultural database to reconsider development, resilience, and sustainability in the Anthropocene.

Keywords: Ecocriticism, Indian English poetry, nature, culture, environmental crisis, postcolonial ecocriticism, Anthropocene

1. Introduction

In modern world, environmental issues have attained a level and an urgency never before experienced in history. Late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries have been marked by the accelerated ecological deterioration attending rising global temperatures, ice caps melting, mass extinction of species, diminishing groundwater reserves, desertification, poisonous industrial wastes in the atmosphere and rising resource wars. Such environmental disasters have forced theorists in the humanities to reconsider the nature-culture dichotomy, and literature has become a key area of concern in theorizing ecological awareness and ecological ethics (Buell, 1995; Garrard, 2012) [3, 12]. Among the most impressive changes in this intellectual landscape, the introduction of ecocriticism in a disciplinary field that studies the mutual relations between the depiction of literature and the material environment is to be mentioned. Ecocriticism, although emerging within Euro-American settings, has expanded to become an international practice, embracing more and more a wider range of environmental history, indigenous cosmologies and postcolonial politics (Glotfelty and Fromm, 1996; Huggan and Tiffin 2010) [13, 17].

In India, the ecological concerns can be approached in conjunction with the multidimensional socio-cultural processes: centuries-old histories of colonization, the accelerated postcolonial industrialization, the disparity of access to the environment and exposure to risks created by caste, and the continuous land, forest, and river conflicts between tribal and marginalized groups. The Indian environmental humanities therefore exist in an Indian terrain that is coined by cultural memory, sacred geography and developmental pressure. This renders Indian English poetry to be an important storehouse in understanding the conflicts between nature, culture, and the present ecological crisis. Indian English poets, such as Nissim Ezekiel, A. K. Ramanujan, Jayanta Mahapatra, and Mamang Dai and Temsula Ao, do not just act in locations passively as a poetic setting but interpret them as an active, conflicting space that develops through memory, spirituality, violence, and resistance (Pandey, 2014; Ravindra, 2014) [23, 27].

Thoughts of Indian ecology put much emphasis on the indigenous epistemologies such as prakriti (nature), dharma (ethical duty), and rta (cosmic order). These cultural systems determine how Indian poets think of their connection to the nonhuman world. In the post-Independence era, there is a strong presence of the ecological imbalance and the changing nature of relationship between man and nature in many of the poems written during this era. Rapid urbanization, industrial wastes, forestry degradation, rivers contamination, and commodification of sacred sceneries are all present as major

themes in the writings of the contemporary poets. Consequently, Indian English poetry is also an active participant of the worldwide environmental discourse and at the same time, it is also based upon local cultural and ecological traditions (Nayar, 2010) [21].

The nature, culture, and crisis of the Indian ecocriticism of poetry is the central theme of this paper, which emerged as a result of the necessity to comprehend the ways in which poetry responds to the environmental crisis of the modern Indian society. This research aims at achieving three broad goals. On the one hand, it provides a thorough theoretical background of the ecocriticism as a discipline, including the development of environmental literary studies to the postcolonial ecocriticism which prefigures inequality, exploitation, and environmental justice. Secondly, it makes intensive analyses of some of the poems by leading poets of Indian English, whose poetry is ecologically conscious and culturally aware. Through these readings, we can see that poets theorize nature as an experienced place, cultural memory, spiritual being, or ecological casualty. Third, the paper presents a conceptual framework to demonstrate how the poetic descriptions of nature relate with the more general socio-cultural, political and environmental crisis in contemporary India. The study pre-historicizes the scholarly basis of the initial 20 years of the ecocritical research in India through restricting its frame to publications published prior to 2018.

This is the idea of ecocriticism as developed by early theorists like William Rueckert which saw literature as the means by which ecological principles could be comprehended (Rueckert, 1978) [28]. The institutionalization of the field started in the 1990s with such works as The Ecocriticism Reader, edited by Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm (1996) [13], which defined ecocriticism as the study of the connection between literature and the physical world. This definition was later extended by other theorists such as Lawrence Buell, who maintained that environmentally oriented literature should be able to represent nonhuman environment as a living entity that can affect narrative, character and theme (Buell, 1995) [3]. In the 2000s, the theoretical breadth of ecocriticism expanded even more with the emergence of environmental justice theory, animal studies, ecofeminism and postcolonial ecocriticism (Garrard, 2012; Huggan and Tiffin, 2010) [12, 17].

Ecocriticism Postcolonial ecocriticism applies specifically to the Indian context. The input of scholars like Rob Nixon (2011) is the development of such notions as slow violence where the harm to the environment is built up and disproportionately harms the marginalized population. The Indian environmental history which is characterized by deforestation, mining, building of dams, and forced displacement fit in this framework (Guha, 2000) [15]. Indian English poetry, when viewed in this perspective, demonstrates the way in which the degradation of the environment collides with social inequalities based on caste, class, gender and ethnicity. Poems about polluted rivers, city poverty, depletion of forests, or groves of sacred places ravaged by industry have the effect of indirectly criticising unfair development policies (Anupama, 2014) [33].

In addition to these political aspects, it is also through nature that the Indian English poets view culture as a place of memory. Rivers, mountains, forests, and monsoon landscapes act as stores of the local knowledge, spirituality, and historical existence. To exemplify the point, the imagery of a river Mahanadi frequently used by Jayanta Mahapatra brings out the ecological and cultural lifeworld of Odisha. Equally, the Northeastern poets Mamang Dai and Temsula Ao predict tribal cosmologies where mountains and rivers have agency, ancestral importance, and powers (Dai, 2004; Ao, 2009) [8, 31]. Such landscapes are destroyed, thus becoming not only the ecological crisis but the cultural and existential crisis. This study refers to the study as mnemonic ecology, which explains the relationship of ecological spaces and cultural identity.

The other essential aspect of Indian English ecopoetry is urban ecologies. Such poets as Nissim Ezekiel, Dilip Chitre, and Gieve Patel portray the Indian modern city as a place of pollution, overcrowding, sewage, industrial waste and rotting infrastructure. Their writings describe the destruction of natural environments, the change of rivers into poisonous streams, and the estrangement of people in aggressively industrial environments (Chitre, 1980) [5]. These images point out to the ecological violence inherent in the process of urbanization and the modern world of development. These poems mirror the rest of the environmental justice movements in India that criticize the disproportionate damage wrought by the fast economic growth.

There are ways in which gender will affect ecological experience. According to ecofeminist scholars, the domestic work of women, as they collect water, fuel and food, creates a specific ecological knowledge, particularly among rural and indigenous populations (Shiva, 1988) [29]. The poems of Indian English poetry have been infused by these gendered ecologies, and by the poems which prefigure the embodied lives of women in their scarcity, contamination or displacement by the environment. As do Eunice de Souza and a few women nowadays, poets draw on the overlaps of gender, environment, and urban vulnerability. Therefore, ecocriticism in the Indian English poetry cannot be isolated of the social justice, gender, and human rights issues.

The current study is to examine these varied dimensions by using a qualitative text analysis of a purposive corpus of 50 poems by 10 leading Indians English poets. The ecocritical scholars and their prominent contribution to the Indian poetry were also used as a criterion to select poets (Pandey, 2014; Mishra, 2014; Anupama, 2014) [23, 20, 33]. The poems were coded using recurring ecological themes: symbolism of landscape, ecological knowledge of the indigenous people, ecological degradation in cities, nonhuman agency, pollution, climatic phenomena, gendered ecological experiences, and violence against nature. Such a coding methodology allows micro-level interpretations and macro-level mapping of themes and assists in recognizing patterns at the poets and region scales.

There are two tasks that the analysis should achieve. First, it outlines the ways Indian English poets theorize the more-than-human world as something sacred, threatened, interconnected, or damaged. Second, it depicts the way in which the poem interposes the ecological realities with the cultural imagination. Literature in this mediation is a kind of ecological knowledge, which can oppose the mainstream discourses of exploitation and can be able to present alternative discourses of coexistence, sustainability, and ethical accountability.

Overall, this introduction provides the theoretical, cultural, and methodological basis of studying the Indian English poetry in the ecocritical approach. It positions poetry in the context of the environmental crisis in the country, broadly,

and the development of the ecocritical theory, in particular, and it shows how the analysis of literature can help understand the intricate relationship between nature, culture, and crisis. The study, by presupposing the pre-2018 scholarship ground, adds to the ecocritical discourse and the analysis of Indian English poetry as an essential cultural reaction to the ecological issues of the contemporary period.

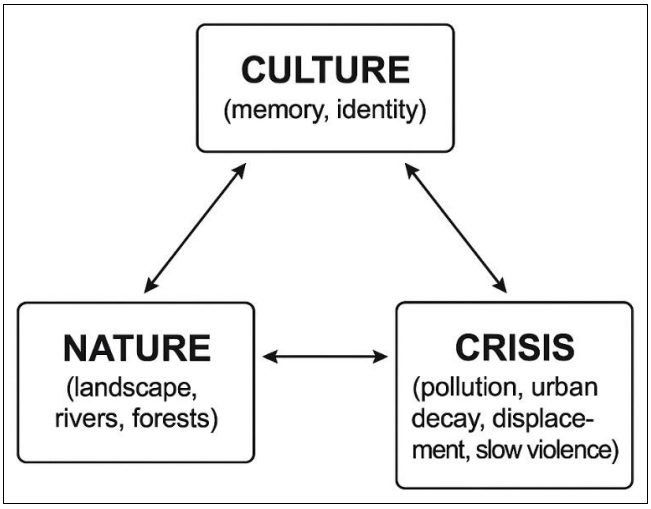


Fig 1: Ecocritical Triad in Indian English Poetry

2. Theoretical Framework: From Ecocriticism to Postcolonial Ecologies

The theoretical basis of the present research is the interdisciplinary area of ecocriticism, which is a part of the literary and cultural studies, exploring the connection between the environment and literature. The term was coined in 1978 by William Rueckert (1978) [28] in his groundbreaking essay Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism, where he suggested that literary texts can be analyzed using the concepts of ecology (interdependence, energy exchange, and systemic balance). Though largely isolated in its early years, Rueckert has provided the basis of a systematic exploration of the way literature describes, creates, criticizes or supports attitudes towards the natural world.

Towards the 1990s, ecocriticism was more clearly structured as a discipline. The anthology by Cheryl Glotfelty and Harold Fromm The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology (1996) [13], is generally regarded as the pioneer work which provided the discipline with an institutional integrity. Glotfelty described ecocriticism as a study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment and implied that in the same way feminist criticism addresses gender or Marxist criticism addresses the issues of class, ecocriticism focuses on the human-nature relationship by interpreting the text. The rise of the field of study at this time went together with the increase in international consciousness of the issue of environmental degradation and the necessity of an interdisciplinary response to ecological crises.

The collection of Glotfelty and Fromm contributed to the canonization of the main concepts including nature writing, pastoral literature, wilderness narratives, and environmental justice. These initial systems focused on the moral value of nonhuman lives and the need to consider nature to be not a passive background but as an active entity. Ecocriticism therefore put literary studies to task to recognize the material environment as an analytical object worthy of being studied (Glotfelty & Fromm, 1996) [13].

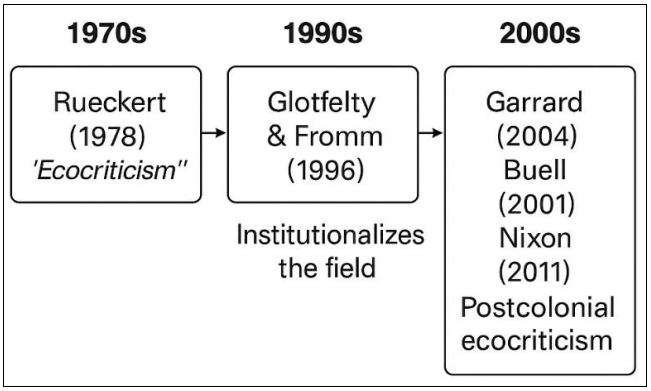


Fig 2: Evolution of Ecocritical Theory (Pre-2018)

2.1 Expansion of Ecocritical Thought: Buell, Garrard, and Environmental Imagination

Lawrence Buell is one of the most powerful representatives of the second wave of ecocriticism. Buell (1995) [3] suggested that there are many criteria according to which environmental texts can be recognized in The Environmental Imagination (1995):

1. They introduce the environment as something that influences the human life,
2. They are aware of the agency of the environment,
3. They show an ethical disposition of the world of nature, and
4. They provoke the readers to think critically about environmental crisis.

Late Buell used the same in Writing for an Endangered World (2001), which elaborated on the role that literature has in responding to ecological harm, as well as in the historical and cultural comprehension of environmental change. He analyzed the effects of catastrophe, survival and change of the environment as they are depicted in narratives on collective memory and ethical accountability. The work of Buell therefore broadened ecocriticism out of pastoral nostalgia by connecting environmental interpretation to social history, political systems and ethical values.

The field was further systematized by Greg Garrard with Ecocriticism (2004, 2012) which systematizes the field into thematic tropes, including pollution, wilderness, apocalypse, dwelling and animals. Garrard underlined the fact that ecocriticism is rather more than a description but more of an ideology. His emphasis on the conflicting attitude, expressed through literary depiction of land, animals, and ecosystems, included romantic idealization, anthropocentric domination, ecological stewardship or indigenous reverence. The synthesis of an extensive range of theoretical and literary traditions made Garrard work the key introductory reading of students and scholars, and made ecocriticism gain academic recognition throughout the world.

2.2 The Rise of Postcolonial Ecocriticism

Although early ecocriticism centered on Euro-American nature writing, forests and experiences of the wilderness, early 2000s saw the development of postcolonial ecocriticism that explored environmental problems in the Global South. The problem of environmental degradation in the formerly colonized territories became integrable to

imperial pasts of extraction, land dispossession and exploitation of resources (Mukherjee, 2010; Huggan and Tiffin, 2010) [17].

Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor (2011) by Rob Nixon turned into one of the significant theoretical turning points. Nixon believed that most environmental destruction occurs as a form of slow violence, i.e. a type of harm that is cumulative, gradual and is often invisible. Contrary to dramatic natural tragedies like a flood or storm, slow violence incorporates long-term impacts of exposure of poisonous wastes, soil erosion, water contamination and community displacement as a result of dam construction or mining activities. These types of environmental injustices are unevenly impacting the poor populations in Asia, Africa, and lower-caste across Latin America with marginalized groups, including the tribal communities, lower-caste populations, and the rural poor.

This work of Nixon contributed to the shift of ecocriticism out of the sphere of aestheticism of the wilderness, to the sphere of social justice, structural violence, and political ecology. This change is very much in line with the Indian experience of the environment where colonial forestry, mega industrialization infrastructure projects and postcolonial industrialization have generated a massive ecological and human displacement (Guha, 2000) [15].

2.3 Indian Contributions to Postcolonial Ecocriticism

The emphasis on ecological crises by Indian environmental scholarship, spearheaded by historians like Ramachandra Guha, provided even more support to the claim that ecological crises cannot be separated out of political and economic institutions. In The Unquiet Woods (2000) and Ecology and Equity (with Madhav Gadgil, 1995) [16], Guha showed how colonial-era forest policies, timber extraction and government-driven conservation initiatives interfered with the traditional ecological practices in India. Guha claimed that environmental policies tended to disallow the indigenous and rural community associating them with forests and rivers that constituted their cultural and economic livelihoods.

Following these historical analyses, literary critics such as Upamanyu Pablo Mukherjee made an inquiry into the manner the Indian literary texts reveal the messaging of entanglement between the empire, environment, and capitalist development. The Mukherjee contributions emphasized that environmental degradation of India is linked to land alienation, poor management of the urban wastes, and colonial exploitation history. At the same time, ecocritic Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin (2010) [17] focused on how in postcolonial literature nonhuman agency, indigenous ecological knowledge, and hybrid cultural landscapes created through the colonial encounter are often foregrounded.

Therefore, postcolonial ecocriticism does not handle environmental issues only as a thematic issue, but it is a kind of structural power that defines the aesthetics of literary works, their form dramaturgical form, and their cultures.

2.4 Indian Literary Criticism and Ecocritical Adaptations

There has been a slow process of the Indian literary criticism undergoing ecocritical sensitivity based on both the traditional Indian ecological thought and the world theoretical frameworks. M. A. R. Habib, Padmini Mongia, and Pramod K. Nayar are some of the scholars who have discussed the role of environmental concerns in postcolonial literatures and cultures. According to Nayar (2010) [21], the ecocriticism in India should take into consideration several mediations, which include: religion, caste, gender, agrarian tradition, and uneven development.

Nayar argues that Indian texts tend to develop nature in culturally specific forms based on indigenous cosmologies, sacred geography and community identity. Indian poetry does not paint pictures of rivers, groves or mountains as landscapes, but as a narrative place that is woven with rituals, myths, and social belonging. Due to this reason, environmental destruction is not merely a biophysical issue, but is a cultural obliteration, social displacement, and spiritual fragmentation.

Indian ecocriticism is also informed by the work of Padmini Mongia on colonial discourse since it revealed how the modern environmental policies are still influenced by the colonial construction of land and agriculture. In the meantime, the ecology, postcoloniality and ideology links in the theoretical frameworks developed by Habib assist in placing the Indian English literature into the global ecological discourse.

2.5 Ecocritical Assumptions Underpinning This Study

Based on the above theoretical developments, this piece of work will employ the use of a postcolonial ecocritical framework whose main assumptions are threefold:

1. Nature as the Real and as Construct.

The research presupposes that nature has ecological reality, rivers, forests, soil, climate functioning, nevertheless, there are cultural meanings which are constructed to the nature in literary texts as well. Indian English poems tend to incorporate material sceneries with mythological or religious imagery. Therefore, nature is a physical ecosystem and culture text at the same time. Such duality is essential to examine those poems which represent sacral rivers, mountains of ancestors or forests that have rituals.

2. Disparity in the Distribution of the ecological risk.

Impoverished communities are disadvantaged by environmental crises. This is in line with the slow violence as proposed by Nixon (2011) [22] and the environmental inequality as proposed by Guha (2000) [15]. Such disparities find reflection in Indian English poetry in the form of streams of rivers that are polluted in an urban slum environment, deforestation among tribal groups, or agrarian misery, as in drought. The identification of these inequalities makes the study perceive poetic landscapes not as desituated places but as disputed places created by power and injustice.

3. Poetic Landscapes as Memory Archives, Resistance Archives and Crisis Archives.

The poets tend to act as libraries of culture, as they contain ecological memory and the loss of the environment. To illustrate, accounts of Mahanadi river in the poetry of Mahapatra or holy mountains in the poetry of Northeast are evidence of the environmental transformation, displacement, and survival of culture. Landscape imagery is used by many poets to criticize developmentalism, lament the destruction of the environment, or imagine other ecological

possibilities. Such imagery can be read in this study as a literary response to ecological crisis.

2.6 Conclusion of Theoretical Orientation.
Overall, the theoretical framework of this study is informed by a mixture of:

- First-wave ecocriticism (Buell, Garrard, Glotfelty).
- Ecocriticism Postcolonial (Nixon, Mukherjee, Huggan & Tiffin)
- Indian environmental history and criticism (Guha, Nayar, Mongia).

Such a mixed methodology makes it possible to interpret Indian English poetry in a more subtle way, accepting materiality of environment and cultural particularity. It looks into how poets can come to negotiate the dialectics of nature, culture and crisis using ecological reality, indigenous epistemologies and postcolonial histories.

3. Ecocriticism in Indian English Poetry: Corpus and Method

The available materials prove that, since the early Romantic imitations, the Indian English poetry has been associated with nature, even the modernist and postmodernist experiments (Pandey; Eco-consciousness in Indian English Poetry). Nevertheless, ecological issues also become more precise in the post-Independence era when poets have to deal with urbanization, industrial pollution, and deprivation of the rural and tribal population.

In this work, ten poets were chosen, including both canonical modernists and more regionally based and generally less mainstream writers: Nissim Ezekiel, A. K. Ramanujan, Jayanta Mahapatra, Arun Kolatkar, Keki N. Daruwalla, Gieve Patel, Dilip Chitre, Mamang Dai, Temsula Ao and Eunice de Souza. The sample consists of metropolitan and peripheral areas (Mumbai, Delhi, Orissa, the Northeast), secular and religious imaginaries, and male and female views, which permits to discuss the different ways in which ecological crisis is experienced in India.

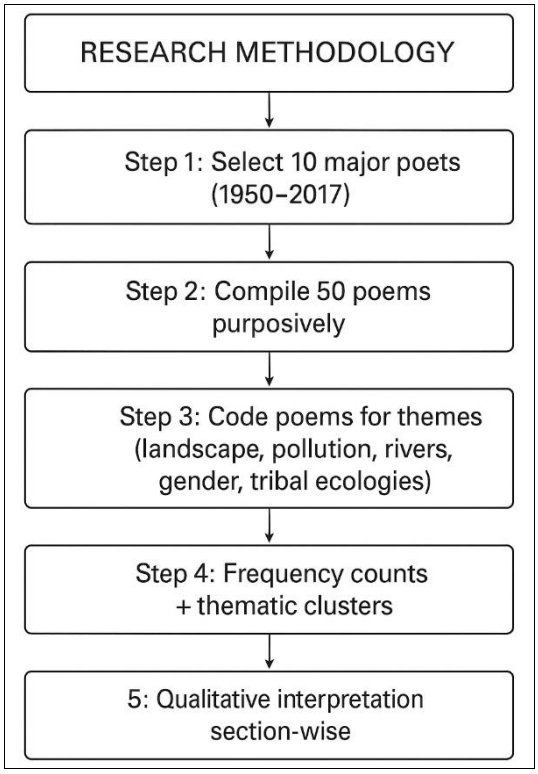


Fig 3: Research Methodology Flowchart

Table 1: Major Indian English Ecopoets and Dominant Ecological Concerns (Sample)

Poet	Representative collection / text (pre-2018)	Dominant ecological concerns	Nature-culture nexus
Nissim Ezekiel	Collected Poems	City/nature split, sanitation, everyday pollution	Alienated modern subject in urban landscape
A. K. Ramanujan	Collected Poems	Trees, rivers, domestic gardens, village memory	Diasporic memory and native landscape
Jayanta Mahapatra	Relationship	Monsoon, river Mahanadi, agrarian distress	Mytho-historical Orissa and modern poverty
Arun Kolatkar	Jejuri	Rocks, hills, shrines, tourist gaze	Pilgrimage, commodification of landscape
Gieve Patel	Poems	Trees, slaughterhouses, medicalized bodies	Violence against human and nonhuman life
Dilip Chitre	Travelling in a Cage	Urban rivers, sewage, industrial waste	Modernization as ecological and psychic crisis
Keki N. Daruwalla	Crossing of Rivers	Floods, drought, riverine ecologies	State, development, and disaster
Mamang Dai	River Poems (and others)	Mountains, rivers, indigenous rituals	Tribal cosmology and modern intrusion
Temsula Ao	Laburnum for My Head (poems and stories)	Forests, spirits, insurgency	Sacred groves and militarized landscapes
Eunice de Souza	Selected and New Poems	Urban gardens, animals, Catholic imagery	Gendered domestic and urban ecologies

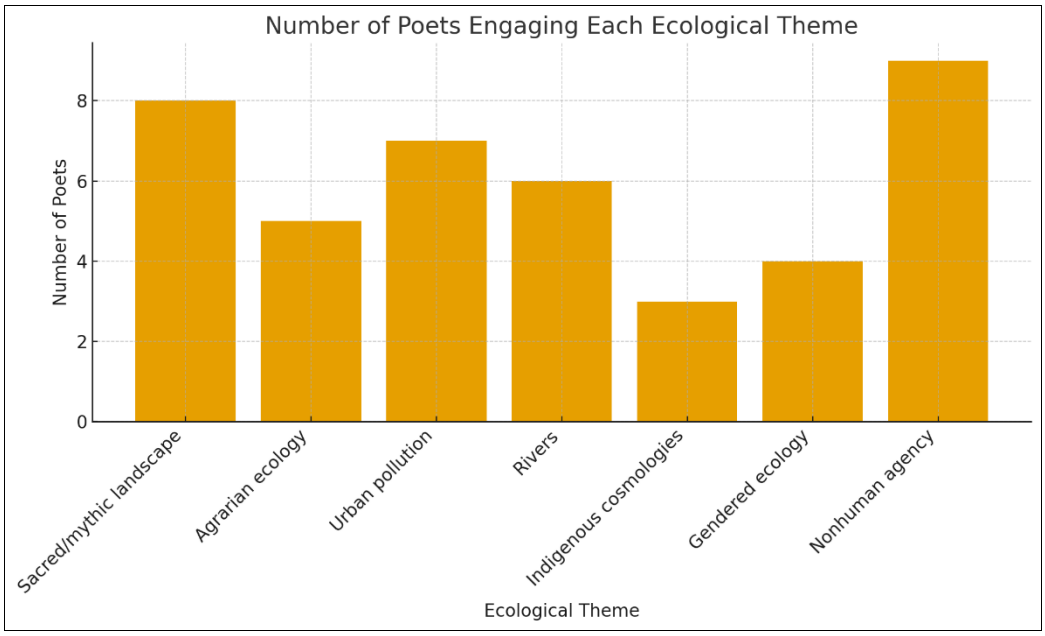
Seven recurrent clusters were discovered by means of thematic coding:

1. Holy and mythological places.
2. Peasant suffering and agrarian ecologies.
3. Violence infrastructures and urban pollution.
4. Rivers as givers of life and sources of toxicity.
5. Cosmology of the indigenous and the tribal.
6. Environmental and gender change as an experience.
7. Ethical call of the nonhuman suffering (animals, trees, rivers).

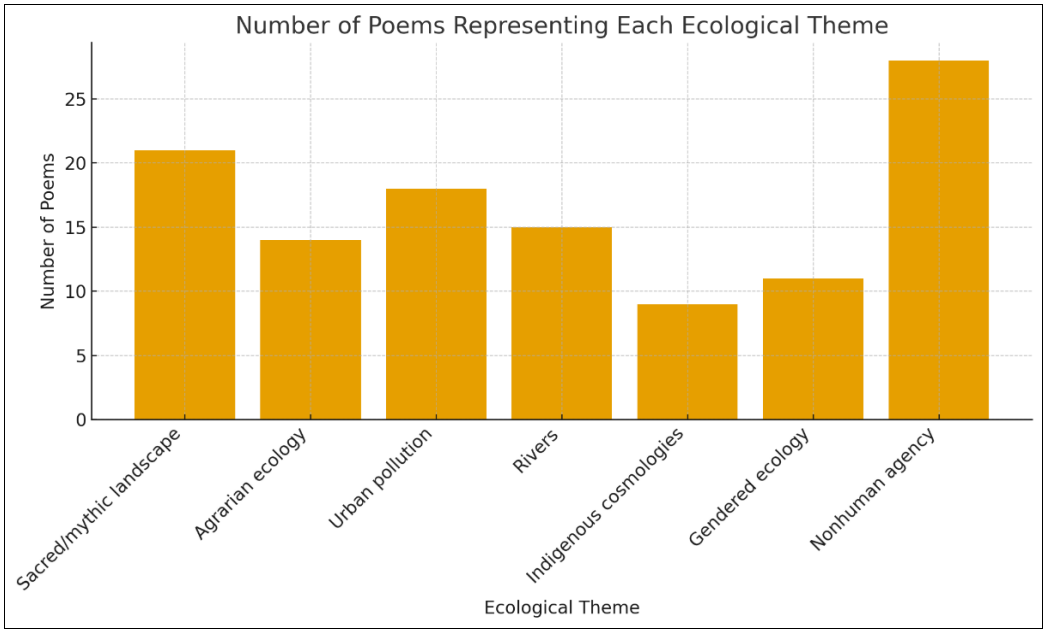
Table 2: Frequency of Dominant Ecological Themes in the Sampled Corpus

Theme	Number of poets engaging it (out of 10)	Approx. number of poems coded with theme (out of 50)
Sacred / mythic landscape	8	21
Agrarian ecology and peasant distress	5	14
Urban pollution / industrial degradation	7	18
Rivers (life and toxicity)	6	15
Indigenous / tribal cosmologies	3	9
Gendered environmental experience	4	11
Nonhuman suffering and agency	9	28

These numbers are descriptive, not exhaustive, made to help see trends which are investigated in the subsequent sections qualitatively. They demonstrate that nearly every poet in the sample records nonhuman sufferings and agency as well as the urban and riverine crisis are at minimum as eminent as agrarian issues.



Number of Poets Engaging Each Ecological Theme



Number of Poems Representing Each Ecological Theme

4. Nature as Lived Landscape and Cultural Memory

The considerable corpus of Indian English verse as a whole creates nature as something not as a distant scenery, but as something lived in, something as villages, rivers, groves, and courtyards, which provide a stable home to memory and identity. The landscape of Indian poetry as critics have argued stands out as something that can hardly be separated out of cultural history and community practices (Pandey).

The poems of A. K. Ramanujan often play the scenes of confrontation between the urban and diasporic selves and the recalled South Indian landscapes the margosa tree, the well, the family house. The past is still present in globalized modernity in trees and tiny garden plots; the trees and small garden plots are weak pockets of the ecological and cultural continuum. The contrast of the concrete apartments with the color of trees takes a mute ecocritical position: urban built landscapes seem sterile in contrast to older more permeable spaces in which humans and nonhumans coexist.

Relationship by Jayanta Mahapatra connects the river Mahanadi to the Orissa history, where monsoon cycles, agricultural work, and myths are combined. The river is not simply a hydrological structure, but it is also a living history of colonization, famine, and survival. Its seasonal swings are the opposite of the disruptive powers of dams, markets and bureaucracy. A key example of this, in this regard, is Mahapatra which, as Buell describes, exemplifies an environmental imagination in which place becomes a multifaceted temporal and ethical palimpsest.

Landscape is further still made a place of cultural memory and native sovereignty in the work of North-Eastern poets such as Mamang Dai and Temsula Ao. In her ecocritical analysis of a few writers of the North East India, Anupama observes that rivers and mountains in this part are not simply scenic setting, but they are kin and ancestors, as well as gods, ingrained in the tribal cosmologies and practices. The ecological and cultural crisis is also present when these landscapes are endangered by the hydropower projects, logging or militarization. The use of forest names as elders and rivers as mothers in poems in such a way confront the anthropocentrism and utilitarianism of nature, compelling readers to see nature as having a history and agency other than human.

In each of these scenarios, nature is, in a sense, a kind of mnemonic ecology, that is, a system where the memory of the individual and the collective is stored. The annihilation of the ecology is thus a cultural amnesia: as a banyan tree gets cut down or a river gets dammed, entire modes of knowledge and being are at risk.

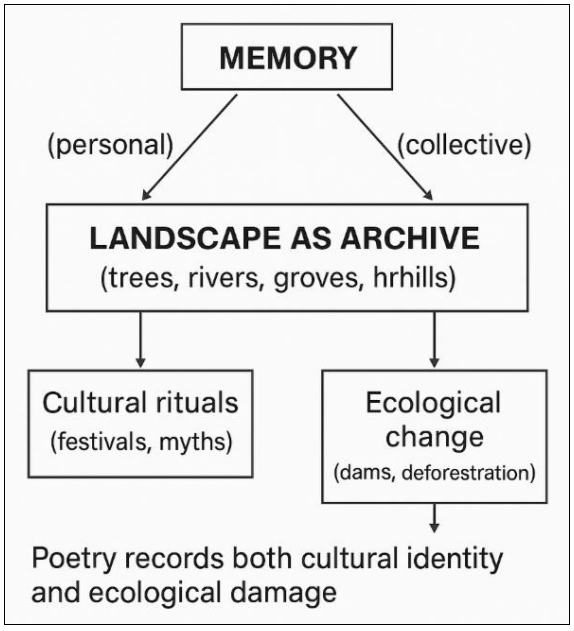


Fig 4: Mnemonic Ecology Model

5. Urban Ecologies and Industrial Crisis

With the ecological memory preserved by the rural and indigenous landscapes, Indian English poetry is no exception as it also is consumed with ecological violence of urbanization and industrialization. Critics of Indian poetry have noted that the present Indian English verse is characterized by high level of city consciousness in the poetry of writers who have their basis in Mumbai Delhi and other city centers (Ravindra; Mishra).

The city poems of Nissim Ezekiel are full of sensual density of traffic, dust and congestion. Although they are not explicitly environmentalist, they imply some sort of environmental alienation: the only nature is represented as stunted trees at traffic islands or polluted sea at the outskirts of the city. The nonhuman world is therefore minimized, broken and displaced to the human business and movement.

More extreme is the ecocritique of the city by Dilip Chitre and Gieve Patel. The repetitive nature of sewage rivers and industrial garbage that Chitre repeatedly paints is a symbol of modernization as an ecological and psychic pollution. The poems by Patel on slaughterhouses and hospitals point to the systemic violence that cuts across the line of species; the dismembered animal and the tormented human body are intertwined as the similarly instrumental rationality victims. An eco-critic such as Suresh Frederick, who writes on Indian poetry, interprets such scenes in the form of an indictment of a civilization that has lost the ethical association with life itself.

Keki N. Daruwalla often enacts floods, droughts, and other so-called natural disasters as the processes that are mixed with the state policy, developmental projects, and negligence. His poems about rivers demonstrate the way dams, embankments, and irrigation projects change the ecological patterns usually enhancing the disasters they are supposed to prevent. Here, the poems of Daruwalla sound close to the ecocritical postcolonial discourse of how extensive developmental undertakings bring what Nixon terms the slow violence, against the susceptible populations and ecological systems.

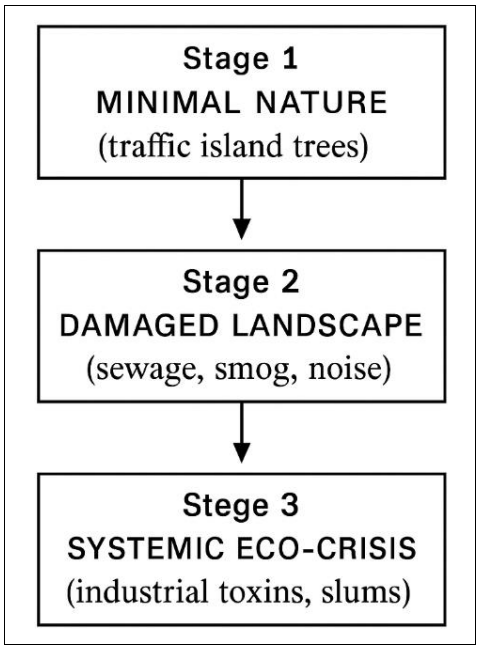


Fig 5: Stages of Urban Ecological Estrangement

1. Minimal Nature Minimal nature manifests itself as decorative or peripheral (traffic island trees, sea-view apartments).
2. Broken Earth- literal scenes of the pollution, overpopulation, and the degradation of the infrastructure (sewage, smog, noise).
3. Systemic Crisis - the realization of the structural production of environmental damage by urban planning, capitalism and state policies (slums near toxic industries, encroachments on rivers).

And through this route, most of the Indian English poems proceed, not casually noting the ugliness of the city, but gradually to realize the ecological injustices within a system.

6. Indigenous Cosmologies, Gendered Ecologies, and Environmental Justice

Ecocritical theorists are now more willing to stress the fact that ecological concerns cannot be dissociated with the issue of social justice, gender, caste, and ethnicity. This understanding is echoed in India in movements like Chipko, Narmada Bachao Andolan, and the struggles of India's tribes against dispossession, which have anticipated women leadership and ecological wisdom of the tribal people (Guha; Kaur and Kaur).

The Northeast poets such as Mamang Dai, Temsula Ao are the representatives of this ecology-justice intersection. In their work forests, mountains, and rivers are introduced as active members of the life of the community; on the contrary, these landscapes are also depicted as places of exploitation, militarization and displacement. The poems commemorating the destruction of the sacred groves or the blocking of the rivers, tend to document not only sorrow over nonhuman life, but also sorrow over the loss of the communal ties and practices. In her ecocritical analysis, Anupama examines a few choices of the Northeast Indian poets and emphasizes the point that the intimate relationship that the individuals have with nature is being shattered by the fast changing socio-economic factor.

The notion of gendered ecologies finds its reflection in the works of poets such as Eunice de Souza and several poems of Mahapatra and Dai that center on the theme of women working and their fragile bodies. Domestically, kitchens, courtyards, wells, women control water, fuel and food and thus are well aware of the consequences of scarcity, pollution and environmental transformation. Such poems can be interpreted by ecofeminist views, including the ones expressed by Val Plumwood and Vandana Shiva, who help to see the poems as the criticism of patriarchy and the destruction of ecology. Even though Indian English poetry does not heavily embrace ecofeminist language, its descriptions of overworked bodies, contaminated water, and unsafe streets and streets tend to resonate with the ecofeminist issues of the mutual exploitation of women and nature.

Ecological imaginaries are also constructed based on regional and religious differences. An example is that cyclones and sea level fluctuation are predicted in poems in the coastal areas, whereas drought and groundwater depletion are emphasized in those in the arid areas. These differences justify the eco-critical studies argument of regional poems that environmental crisis in India has a skewed distribution and varied experience of the same (Kaur and Kaur).

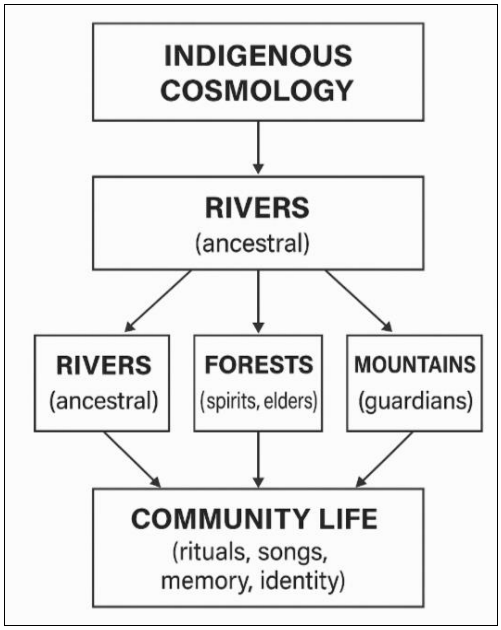


Fig 6: Indigenous Ecological Worldview in Northeast India

7. Nonhuman Agency and the Ethics of Attention

Among the most provocative arguments of ecocriticism is the idea that one can use literature to make readers see nonhuman objects as living beings and not as lifeless objects. As Buell, Garrard, and others claim, environmental writing tends to give voice, will or affections to animals, plants and scenery, and thus refute anthropocentric beliefs.

Such agency is often attributable to trees, rivers and animals in Indian English poetry. The urban rivers as discussed by Dilip Chitre almost talk in their smell and colour and accuse the city that has polluted them. The description of the trees by Gieve Patel who is threatened with cutting is done in a manner that brings out the vulnerability and dignity of the trees. The rivers and mountains of Mamang Dai are the guardians, the observers, and even the adjudicators of the human activity.

In her work about eco-consciousness in Indian English poetry, Pandey mentions that a significant number of poems are characterized by a conservationalist approach, which is based on the traditional Indian respect towards nature as something sacred. New environmental poems are not so much in the way of eulogism of the natural world, but rather of a contrasting attitude between reverence and malignant scenes of destruction- rivers of plastic debris, trees being cut down, soil being poisoned. The conflict between the two registers asks the audience to think about the ethical cost of environmental destruction: not only do resources go to waste, but connections with sentient, narrated beings are destroyed.

Morally speaking, these poems are an aesthetics of paying attention. They promote an awareness of nonhuman vulnerability and interdependence by slowing down the perception, linger over minor details, a bird mired in tar, a tree in sap, a river made black, and so on. Such aesthetic approach intersects with environmental philosophy which requires more broad concepts of community, like the more-than-human world.

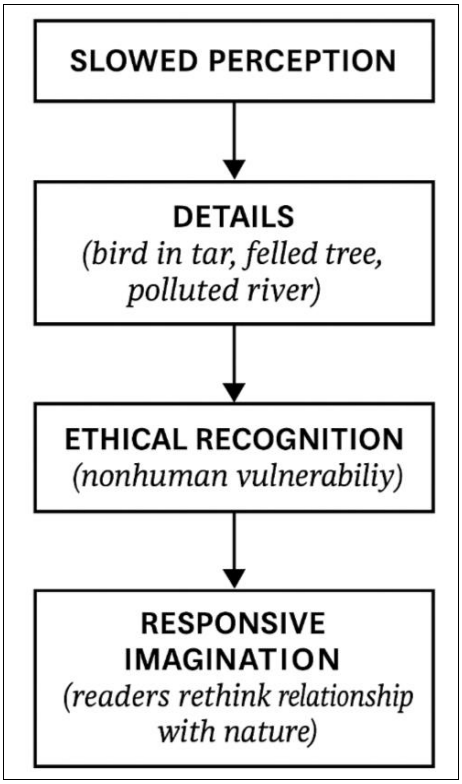


Fig 7: Aesthetics of Attention to Nonhuman Beings

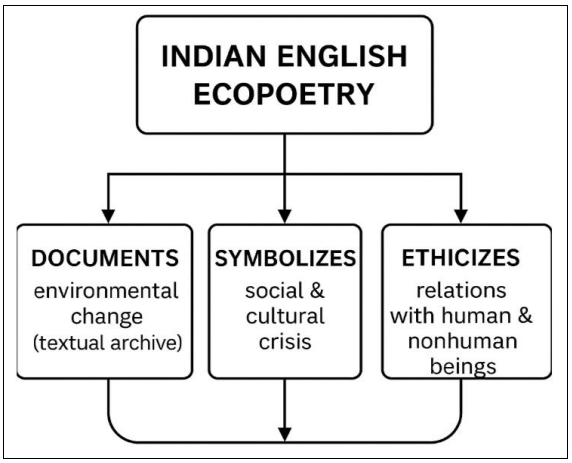


Fig 8: Functions of Indian English Ecopoetry

8. Conclusion: Indian English Ecopoetry in the Age of Crisis

The paper has suggested that the Indian English poetry presents an insightful and compelling examination of ecocritical issues in a confluence of nature, culture, and crisis. It has demonstrated how poets have been negotiating various questions linked to each other: based on the critical ecocritical theories and Indian critical scholarship published prior to 2018.

- What can landscapes do to serve as a memory and identity of the culture?
- What is the transformation in ecological imaginaries and the body experience with urbanization and industrialization?
- What does the indigenous cosmologies and gendered approach re-conceptualize about the ethics of human-nonhuman relationships?
- How does poetry make the visible forms of environmental injustice and slow violence visible, that otherwise could be impossible to read?

It can be argued through the analysis that Indian English ecopoetry works on three levels at least. At the descriptive level, it records the change of the environment in the villages, cities and the frontiers. At the symbolic level, it considers matters of modernity, alienation and social inequality as it contemplates using natural images to think. It produces an increased feeling of responsibility to nonhuman creatures and to the future at the ethical level.

It has found its place in an era commonly referred to as the Anthropocene, in which the human-generated activity codes the planetary systems, but in a sense that is rather than reflection it is itself an active contributor to the ecological rhetoric. It is a place where other futures, which are based on memory, justice, and reciprocity, are envisioned. The study could be furthered by future research by covering poetry, performance and spoken-word, or comparative studies with Indian-language ecopoetry in translation and so place Indian English ecocriticism in the context of South Asian and global environmental humanities.

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