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The Green-consciousness and Cataclysmic Outcomes in the Selected Works of Na D'Souza, Mahasweta Devi and Akkineni Kutumbarao: A Study in Ecocriticism

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Abstract:

Literature and ecology have become interdisciplinary subjects because of the intensifying global changes in the environmental sphere therefore feisty writers have opened up to expose the human folly and his uroboric attitude. Subsequently, contemporary creative writing has not been limited to providing aesthetic satisfaction but it has become Pandora's chest for many ecological illustrations and concerns as well. The dynamism of green consciousness and the synchronization of the environmental state of affairs are more communicative and unrestrained in contemporary literature. It has been taking up many man-made calamities and exertions in an admonishing way.

Though the ecological concerns have been exhibited by intellectuals time and again through their writings after the publication of 'The Ecocriticism Reader' in 1996 by Cheryl Glotfelty and Harold Fromm, the idea gathers special shape, attention and moss. Eventually, a new line of thought evolved as *Ecocriticism*; the term *Ecocriticism* was first coined by William Rueckert in his essay, 'Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism' in 1978. Ecocriticism being an interdisciplinary study covers the inter-relationship between nature and man. We can take the examples of the eco-critical texts of indigenous writings like R.K Narayan's *Malgudi Days*, Kamala Markandaya's *Nectar in the Sieve*, Ruskin Bond's *No*

Room for Leopard and *The Cherry Tree*, Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*, Amitav Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies* and *Hungry Tides*, Anita Desai's *Fire on the Mountain* for better insight on the development and history of Eco-Literature in Indian soil.

Keywords: Green consciousness; Ecology; Eco-Literature; Ecocriticism; Eco-nostalgia.

Introduction

From the beginning of time, it is apparent that human beings are enthusiasts, self-motivated and progressive. This innate vigour takes human civilization unceasingly on the path of development for ages; the history of human development itself elucidates the journey of expansion and its budge from caves to skyscrapers. Man indeed exercises his power of contemplation and knowledge but the fact that under his stark ravenousness, he has pushed nature to a place of obscurity that can't be ignored. He always craves more than he needs; this greed in him is innate, unquenched and unsatiated. Mahatma Gandhi has rightly claimed that Mother Nature has adequate resources to accomplish everybody's needs but not everybody's greed. Due to this self-indulgence and gluttony, he has been facing natural and man-made calamities, devastations, and disasters such as global warming, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, ozone depletion, deforestation, piles of waste disposal Green House Effect etc.

Sensitive writers start countering the perils and pitfalls born out of such consequences through their literary fabrications. They have taken up the subject-matters such as disruption of the food chain, rising sea levels, submersion of Islands, melting of glaciers, emission of natural gases, soil erosion, carbon emission and many more for debates and discussions. Contemporary Indigenous writers like Na D'Souza, Mahasweta Devi, and Akkineni Kutumbarao have become the voice of protectors of nature. Eventually, a new consciousness has evolved from their works to safeguard ecology and natural resources. The present research paper aims at to articulate the dynamism of green consciousness and ecological anxiety in contemporary Indigenous literature. The works- *Dweepa* by Na D'Souza, *The Book of the Hunter* by Mahasweta Devi, and *Softly Dies a Lake* by Akkineni Kutumbarao have been taken for the present research endeavour.

The Green -Consciousness and Ecological Concern in Contemporary Indigenous Literature- An Exploration in Ecocriticism:

During the last few decades, the genre congregated special fascination of many writers worldwide to express the voice of umbrage. So far no literature of any pursuit could remain unscathed with the growing impact of environmental concerns. Many Indian writers

also expressed their anxiety and reflection over the weighty issues. Na D'Souza, Mahasweta Devi, and Akkineni Kutumbarao are some of them which are found more significant and worth mentioning for the expression of the present research paper. They not only take up the environmental issues, cultural ethos, substantial impact and anthropocene viewpoint but also try to entail the solution to the problem.

Na D'Souza's *Dweepa* deals with the issues of displacement, dislodgement, and disarticulation of the natives of Sita Island due to the construction of a dam for the *Sharavathi* Hydro-electric Project. The novella exhibits a poignant as well as realistic side of the displacement, terrible failure of policymakers and apathy of bureaucracy. It reminds us of the Sardar Sarovar Dam Project where 42,000 families were displaced and of Bargi Dam Construction which is the first of 30 Dams proposed to be constructed on Narmada River. This Bargi Dam construction ate up 162 villages and left scars in the lives of the *Adivasi*. The writer describes that other than displacement- the act creates a disturbance in the local ecosystem, causes disruption in groundwater and results in drastic climate changes and chaos in the lives of natives. No commodities, no service and no conveniences could ever compensate for the emotions and agony which a migrant bears in mind on the removal from his motherland.

The story speaks about how the chief characters – Duggaja, Ganapayya and Nagiveni are reluctant to leave their homeland for insufficient compensation. Though the author isn't a sound anti-development junkie yet he raises the point in a solid way that compensation may be sufficient and must be reached well in time so that the sufferings could be evaded. "Sharavathi might swallow the Hosamane Parvatha this monsoon" (Na D'Souza 2) reflects the terrible side of human advancement. "All kinds of filthy strangers have stomped on our land, measuring the fields, the farms, the house, the byre, the outhouse, the garden; they have set a price on everything" (Na D'Souza, 3). Every villager has to pay for the coveted fruit of strangers, voracious and of a big business cistern. Ganapayya, Duggajja, and Nagamani feel "outlandish suffocation of advancing of Lorries to their soil" (Na D'Souza 16); they are suffocated by the economic intrusion. Nagiveni falls victim in the hands of Krishnayya; she is the situation-driven character, a victim and core sufferer in the story. Even Ganapayya doesn't receive compensation for his land and suffers at the hands of authority. They witness the gradual wreck in their lives due to this torrential infringement and their lives have become puppets in the hands of authority. The transformation and ephemeral changes due to the construction of the dam have been becoming apparent, "Hosamanehalli looked like an island, like an insignificant rock in the sea, a helpless piece of land surrounded by a watery girdle"

(Na D'Souza 48). Jawaharlal Lal Nehru, the former Prime Minister of India, once claimed that constructing dams is important for the development and modernization of the country; he further added that 'Dams are modern temples' but the consequences like displacement and rehabilitation forced people to live a saddle life. Such constructions bring deep impacts on the Environment, Forest, Bio-diversity, Wildlife and tribal population. "Hosamanehalli was hedged in by muddy water. Creatures that lived in burrows, snake-pits, thickets, caves and hollows of trees came out of their homes, protesting against the gushing water and having free run of the place" (Na D'Souza 82).

Mahasweta Devi in her work *The Book of the Hunter* hoisted the theme of the vicissitudes of the hunter tribe Shabars when more and more forest-land gets cleared to make way for new settlements. They feel robbed of their souls because of the intrusion and withdrawal from their conventional way of life in the name of modernisation. It was shrewd and a systematic mugging of their cultural ethics, their identity and their values. As a result, the ethnic populace, the forest children- are on the verge of extermination in the name of modernization and expansion. Denudation of their forest destroyed their natural world and extinction of many geneses of flora and fauna of their forest land. Subsequently, many rainforest treasures are now turned into barren lands. As per the GOI survey, the average rate of deforestation in India is 0.6% per year and it has been alarmingly escalating. Climate change, flooding and soil degradation have become very normal phenomena worldwide. Mahasweta Devi had been trying to protect the *Adivasi* of the country. She raised her voice through her works- *Hajar Churashi Ki Maa* and *Aranyer Adhikar* which are mouthpieces of *Adivasi*'s trouble and struggle; they are also echoed with environmental concerns as well. Danko Shabar one of the characters of the story claims that forests are receding and cities are coming closer. The reverberation is itself an explicit example that puts across the mental agony and suffering of tribal being expelled from their native soil.

The Book of the Hunter speaks about the encroachment over the territory of *Adivasis* by the non-*adivasis*. The writer exhibits that there is a straightforward commandment of nature; the balance must not be disturbed or else the result would be cataclysmic. "the soil itself nurtures all these little plants, animals, birds and bugs" (Mahasweta Devi 7) The *Adivasis* have concord and deep connection with their environs and afforest; they are true custodian and curator of the woods; they are in sustainable harmony with forests. Ganesh has a great comprehension of the herbs and shrubs of the forest. "He certainly knew a lot about everything" (Mahasweta Devi 11). He also has great affection for the trees planted by his forefathers. But the interruption and imposition of non-*Adivasis* to their homeland over the

years are conspicuous. The consequences could be seen of their covetous act. Their viewpoint toward woodland is spiritual and conceptual. “They worship forest Goddess *Abhayachandi* for prosperity and blessings; they go into the forest to worship Her to celebrate *Asthani* and *Bijoyadashami* during *Durga Puja*” (Mahasweta Devi 56). Mukunda feels bad about the killing of a tiger by Kalya and his gang. Mukunda has to leave his native place, Daminya to *Ararha* in great agony. He doesn’t consider them true sons of Goddess *Abhayachandi*. The great Goddess *Abhayachandi* blessed Sabhar tribe with guard and safety but a Brahmin tried to steal her idol from the middle of the forest and consequently lost all her family members under the act of sin. The hunters have great respect for their motherland and its lavish green forest. “The forest itself is our mother...She gives us fruits, flowers, tubers, leaves, wood, honey, resin, medicine herbs, barks, leaves and roots, even animals to hunt”(Mahasweta Devi 73). Mahasweta Devi tries to investigate the pedantic disturbances in the lives of Sabhars tribes as more and more forest land has been occupied by the authority in the name of development and their bio-network and harmony with forests have been disturbed.

Akkineni Kutumbarao in his masterpiece *Softly Dies the Lake* expresses the major concern of the deteriorating vigour of the natural water resources either being ignored or due to mistreatment. Climate change is the major factor that is responsible for such radical changes. The story talks about the natives whose aspirations, joys and pains are connected with the freshwater lake of their village. The lake is hit by the aquaculture industry which shows the spatial realm of man’s over-exploitation of natural resources. The deteriorating health of the lake brings despair and desolation. The writer has put it in very a straight way through the character Seenu who is an eyewitness to the extensive damage caused to the lake by exploiting its reserve. It reminds us about the diminishing of the Aral Sea Lake of Uzbekistan. It dried up to 90% because an irrigation scheme had been started on it from 1961 to 1980. Now only the debris and skeletons of thousands of ships could be seen on the vast cadaver of the Aral Sea Lake. Natives had to face ecological consequences and on the other hand, millions of marine species had to struggle for existence.

Seenu is flabbergasted at the brisk conversion of a beautiful lake, Kolleru into “filthy pond, a breeding ground for germs, a danger to the environment, a toxic net for birds” (Akkineni Kutumbarao 2). Once Kolleru Lake was alive, the crystal clear water surrounded by amazing white lotus was an occupant of ducks, cranes, Blackbirds, Storks, Herons, Hawks, Spotted beak Ducks, black Bald Hens, water snakes and buffaloes. “It was one of the biggest freshwater lakes in Asia” (Akkineni Kutumbarao 10) Seenu had a profound affinity with Kolleru since his early days. He had felt its cuddle whenever he gushed in its waves.

The trilling of birdsongs and bird calls made the place vibrant with the sound of their music. As the water level decreases globally, numerous lakes have dried up, leading to the potential collapse of food chains and the extinction of various species. This alarming situation has been projected by the writer and he demands immediate attention to mitigate its catastrophic consequences on farmers and fishermen. Since the Kolleru has become a pond of filth and mud, the possibility of flood has also become more frequent. The chances of survival have become less and life is at incessantly stark. "It sometimes takes the entire village up with flood" (Akkineni Kutumbarao 50). Nature nurtures lives but it becomes red in tooth and claw if the basic law is disturbed. The gradual substantial changes consequent upon the ecological turbulences in the lives of villagers are now visible but exigent to survival.

Conclusion:

This interdisciplinary encounter is only because of the expeditious changes taking place in the field of ecology; consequently, the whole of humankind is at stake. It has caught the attention of scholars, scientists and intellectuals who have come forward to sensitise people through their works and research. The changes and dilapidations in the ecology system have become hot subject matters for many literary works, debates and discussions. The works of Na D'Souza, Mahasweta Devi, and Akkineni Kutumbarao and many such authors have been constantly pressing the alarm button just to make people wide awake for the inordinate coming menace of climate change. *Dweepa* by Na D'Souza addresses the displacement and rehabilitation of farmers affected by the construction of dams and hydropower projects. Mahasweta Devi's *The Book of the Hunter* highlights the plight of hunters whose forests are taken away from them, affecting their livelihoods. Akkineni Kutumbarao's *Softly Dies a Lake* focuses on the journey of a dying lake and the challenges faced by fishermen out of this phenomenon.

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