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Tagore and Ecocriticism: An Introduction

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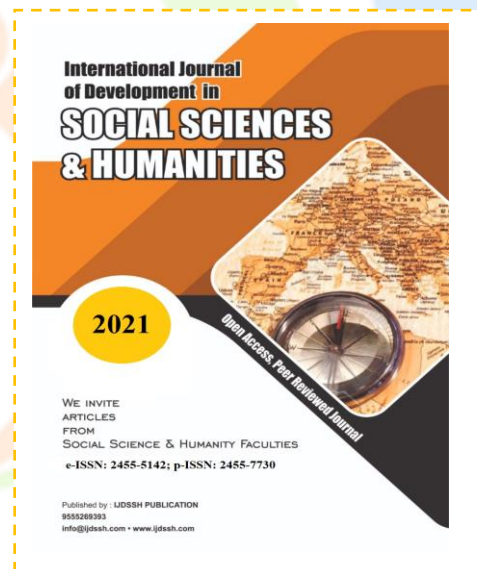
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ABSTRACT

The paper tries to look at the beginning of Ecocriticism as a discipline and how it came into being in the domain of literary studies.

Keywords: *Rabindranath Tagore, Ecology, Ecocriticism*

Rabindranath Tagore was born on May 07, 1861, and rose to be called the Bard of Bengal. Tagore is undoubtedly the most prominent name among the poets writing in the last century and has inspired generations of individuals through his writings, poetry and thoughts. Tagore was somewhat revolutionary, and his works were adored in India as well as across the world. This is common knowledge that 'Gitanjali', first published in 1910, won the most significant literary prize, the Nobel Prize in Literature, in 1913. for "his significantly sensitive, fresh and wonderful verse, by which, with consummate skill, he has made his beautiful idea, expressed in his own English words, a piece of the writing of the West." In fact, Rabindranath Tagore was the first non-European to at any point win a Nobel Prize!(Times of India)

Rabindranath Tagore was brought into the world in the aristocratic family in Calcutta. His family had a scholarly emanation about it. For them, nature was one

of the purest and most delightful creations among others in the universe. Tagore was no particular case in his appreciation and observation of nature. His dad, Debendranath Tagore, was an incredible wanderer whose adoration was the 'Himalayas'. He was a sort of ancient 'Rishi', a title informally presented on him by his fellowmen. Tagore cherished nature, yet it was nature that was close to the habitations of men as far as he might be concerned. Tagore's rivers are not streams flowing in the wilderness and left for long without a sail on their surfaces; they stream by meadows and pastures and a jocund company of earth and ecology. His flowers and bees are in nursery and plantation; his 'forest' is at the village's entryway. His humans' are a necessity to him. All things considered, it remains imperative that we hear next to no of mountains in his verse, yet rains and rivers, trees and clouds and evening glow and first light are a lot of spoken of.

Eco-criticism reflects the most disturbing crisis that has arisen as the most

significant test humanity is looking for. The eco-basic study of writing is an advanced way to deal with the study of nature, climate, and simply all ecosystems and its effect on society. The indispensable inspiration behind any experimental writing is the impact of nature. Nature holds a novel spot in writing, and nature is a character of generosity, virtue and prosperity. No author can escape from the effect that is cast upon the person in question naturally. Writers and their method of living, composing, speaking is loaded with references either straightforwardly or in a roundabout way to nature. Nature captivates Man with its excellence, tune and patterns. As an award, Man captures each beautiful second and turns it into a landmark.

Preceding the second half of the 20th century, many approaches, such as historical, sociological, psychological, model and text based, were used to investigate and assess a writing work, but there was no ecology-based methodology. Begun and created in the nineteen sixties and seventies, today it has developed tall and wide among the critics and lovers of writing all over. In the wake of biological crises like an unnatural weather change, liquefying of icebergs in polar regions heretofore at frozen state for ages, consequently rising sea levels and unforeseen climatic havocs, this basic assessment gains considerable significance and seriousness.

Any cataclysmic event was presumed and spuriously accepted to be the result of heavenly anger by the crude human society. Today, man's scholarly quest has infiltrated profound into each aspect of nature and addressed facts that are neither good nor even satisfactory to his constantly increasing greediness, for it is his own way of life that is a significant cause for these cataclysmic events.

From the above record of Tagore's adoration for nature, it is more than clear that he was not just profoundly associated with the universe of nature, but on the other hand, was exceptionally worried about its virtue and keeping up its excellence in entirety. At the end of the day, as he was a staunch devotee of God, he felt that the best method to keep on having confidence in God is to put forth an earnest attempt to preserve nature or let nature be in its standard structure. Subsequently, the present paper proposes to analyse his poetry from the standpoint of Ecocriticism. The study will see Tagore's poetry according to a perspective that will decide his poetry's environmental concerns.

Tagore's poems on nature are loaded with his intrinsic twisted of romanticism. He is pulled in by the sights, sounds and colors objects of nature. In his affection for nature, there is a characteristic of mysticism. His inclination poetry reminds us of Keats,

Shelly, Tennyson, and Wordsworth. For instance, in *Gitanjali*, the writer juxtaposes two opposite situations while discussing the playing on a woodwind by some resident. Hearing the mystical and mysterious sound of the streaming water and even the breeze blowing seem to give him some message that has the spirit of Godliness in it. Without a doubt, with the sort of a compatibility that Tagore established with nature, he was ready to accomplish oneness with it. He had gotten so engrossed in the activities of nature that different concerns of the world got subservient to him. Thus, the investigation of nature turned into the primary saying of his life.

As Eco-criticism arose as another essential field of study during the 1990s, scholars of artistic Ecocriticism turned a considerable measure of consideration on writers whose works are loaded up with the standard images and themes. Ecocriticism, at that point, attempts to track down a shared view between the human and the nonhuman to show how they can coexist differently because the ecological issues have become an indispensable piece of our existence. In this manner, with the distribution of Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm's joint assortment, *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* in 1996 and Lawrence Buell's *The Environmental*

Imagination in 1995, critics changed their angles of vision and strived for achieving solidarity among man and nature with "one foot in writing and the other on land".

What ecocritics do, includes re-reading the works utilising a nature-based methodology, with specific consideration of the portrayal of nature and laying a considerable emphasis on the part of nature in making solidarity between human minds and nature. Consequently, romantic poetry turned into the principal icon of ecocritical studies. In other words, romanticism touched off the marks of the green consciousness, which was lethally murdered by the short illumination time of Bacon and Descartes. Tagore's *Gitanjali* is possibly the most critical poetical works that epitomise the writer's proclivity towards biology. Tagore's *Gitanjali* (1912) is quite possibly the most vital poetical composition managing ecocriticism.

Tagore's poetry permeates biological elements. These eminences of his characteristic made Tagore part of the disciplinary study of Ecocriticism. He was not mindful of this recently shaped discipline but rather his works by its merits, to be sure turned into a vital part of the discipline. One does not discover Tagore managing the regular marvel as extensively as the better known "nature" poets like William

Wordsworth, Toru Dutt, etc. Yet, as Garrard explains, "it seems likely that any given concerned individual will presumably have both eco-and anthropocentric attitudes at various times, under various conditions". In this way, in some of his poems, one may see that he has taken an alternate point of view by captivating his consideration of nature. His poetry does not consistently, however, resonate with a natural sentiment. Consequently, he could be considered a biologically conscious early present-day writer and a commendable supporter of the discussion of biology when these cutting edge terms were not in existence. One who has known and perused Tagore will quickly discover his life closely receptive to nature and his establishment of Visva Bharati University is one such model which speaks in a volume of his tendency focused energy. A profundity study of Gitanjali songs indeed leads us to three crucial elements: God, Man, and Nature. Nothing seems to remove the consideration of Tagore other than these three essential and unavoidable and essential topics of life.

Nature and literature have always had a close connection as is shown in the works of poets and other authors through the centuries in virtually all civilisations of the globe. Today the close relationship between the natural and social world is being studied

and highlighted in many areas of knowledge and growth. The literary critic examines how the authors have textualised this intimate connection between nature and society in their works. In this context, two words have become highly significant nowadays - ecology and Ecocriticism. India is a nation with diversity of habitats which spans from Himalayas in the north to plateaus of south and from the active Sunderbans in the east to arid Thar of the West. With time, however, many ecosystems have been severely impacted owing to rising population and greed of humans. Literature could not stay untouched by this depletion and this paper only tries to reveal how ecology concerns were always present in the works of writer coming from India and Tagore in particular. Organism and their paraphernalia surround them with a complex connect that is highly complex and dynamic and interconnected, mutually reactive and linked. Ecology, a young study, deals with the different principles that regulate such interactions between species and environment. 1 Today ecology is described as how plants, animals and humans live a synced coexistence and are actively interdependent. In this connection, they are so highly reliant on one other that any disruption is bound to bring changes to the other. Human life has evidenced as and when there are changes brought into this complex matrix of

relationship between civilisation and ecology, more often than not it has ended into the erosion of society. Archives and museums are flooded with the record of artefacts from earlier civilisations in all part of the world and those are reminders to us that the manipulation in the relationship between man and nature has resulted.

Therefore, concern for the environment is one of the most debated topics currently. It is the responsibility of every nation to refill the decreasing elements of the environment which affect human beings the most. The literature widely recognised for reflecting the current problems could not have stayed untouched by this subject—the realm of literature swarms with works dealing with beauty and the force of nature. However, the concern for ecology and the danger that the continuing abuse of our environment puts on humankind has only lately attracted the authors' attention. This feeling of worry and its reflection in literature has given birth to a new area of literary theory, namely Ecocriticism. The term 'ecocriticism' first appeared in William Rueckert's article "Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism" in 1978. (Rueckert) Yet it appears to have remained inactive until the 1989 Western Literature Association meeting (in Loer d'Alene), when Cheryll Glotfelty

(at the time a graduate student at Cornell University and now Assistant Professor of Literature and Environment at the University of Nevada, Reno) not only received the term but also worked to establish it as a critical field. S. Glen Love (Professor of English at the University of Oregon) expressed his support for the need for "ecocriticism." Ecocriticism has grown in popularity in the years after that first meeting in 1989. At first, academics working in this area of literary theory remained peripheral until the late 1980s and early 1990s, when two organisations were established: the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment (ASLE) in 1992 and the Institute for Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment (ISLE), both of which were established in 1993. The publication of two significant books, *The Ecocriticism Reader*, edited by Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm, and *The Environmental Imagination*, by Lawrence Buell, is regarded to have marked the official beginning of the movement in the year 1996.

As a consequence of the environmental catastrophe, which is also a crisis of imagination, new methods of understanding nature and humanity's connection must be discovered and implemented. In Lawrence Buell's *The*

Environmental Imagination, the most ambitious study to date of how literature represents the natural world, he sets himself the job of documenting how literature depicts the natural world. Buell takes us on a wide-ranging trip through environmental perception, the history of nature in western thought, and the implications for a literary study of attempting to imagine a more "ecocentric" way of living, all of which are framed by Thoreau's *Walden* as a starting point. Thoreau's accomplishments are highlighted via this lens, and it is through this lens that our literary and cultural perspectives on nature are radically rethought and reformulated.

Environmental criticism, according to Glotfelty and Fromm (1996), takes an "earthcentered approach to literary studies" rather than an "anthropomorphic or humancentered approach to literature" (p. xviii). The term "environmental critique" refers to the study of "literature and the environment," which has its origins in literary studies. Others refer to Ecocriticism as "environmental criticism" (interdisciplinary and cultural). To provide a clear historical trajectory for the growth of the environmental criticism movement, environmental criticism has been divided into "waves." Generally speaking, the "first wave" of Ecocriticism had a dehistoricised

approach to "nature," ignoring the subject's deeper political and theoretical elements while leaning toward a happy attitude toward wilderness and environmental writing in general. Ecocriticism has emerged as a "second wave" in recent years, offering novel approaches to literary analysis by, for example, theorising and deconstructing human-centered scholarship in ecostudies; imperialism and ecological degradation; animal and plant agency; gender and race as ecological concepts; and issues of scale and scale relations. The "third wave" advocates for a broader global perspective of ecocritical practice, drawing on topics such as global warming. It includes elements of the first and second waves while seeking to go beyond Anglo-American dominance. In the last several years, the area of Ecocriticism has produced hundreds of volumes and thousands of articles and chapter manuscripts.

According to many academics, the basic cause of environmental degradation may be traced back to human activity. The dominance of humans over other forms of life has long been recognised as the fundamental cause of environmental degradation. It should go without saying that the evolution of human civilisation will result in a change in the environment. Although man has always coexisted peacefully with

nature, his attitude toward the environment has shifted dramatically in recent years. Agricultural mechanisation, urbanisation, rising living standards, and development plans are all significant causes to the loss and depletion of natural resources on the globe, and each has a different impact. In recent decades, it has become more difficult to challenge the anthropocentric frame of view that humans have evolved in order to guarantee their own survival. A new book by Rob Boddice, *Anthropocentrism: Humans, Animals, and the Environment*, correctly identifies the threat that faces humans, animals, and the environment as well as the environment itself "Anachronism can be expressed as a critique of human chauvinism or as an acknowledgement of the ontological boundaries of humans, depending on how it is conceived of. The company is at odds with nature, the environment, and nonhuman animals, to name a few things " (1). In the field of Ecocriticism, it is also said that "the major religions and intellectual systems of Western civilisation are fundamentally anthropocentric" (Abrams 81). The interests of human beings, who consider themselves to be superior to other animal species and who use them to achieve their own goals, are, as a consequence, their primary priority. Anthropology is a philosophical perspective that assists us in comprehending the notion that man is at the center of the universe, or

the center of the universe. People depend on animals and the environment for their survival, but they prioritise their own interests over the needs of animals and the natural world on which they rely for sustenance and reproduction. "Anthropocentrism" is "the tendency to greatly exaggerate human dominance, understanding power autonomy unity guilt virtue wickedness and morality" and that "the tendency to greatly exaggerate human understanding, power autonomy unity guilt virtue wickedness and morality" are also "the tendency to greatly exaggerate human dominance, understanding power autonomy unity guilt virtue wickedness and morality" according to Boria Sax.

Tagore is a refined and classical example of how he was ahead of his times in his ecological sense and environmental concerns. In his poetry, we find overwhelming evidence of the coexistence of ecology and civilisation as not a yoking together but something that is organically present.

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