



## Ecopsychological Concerns in Select Works of Indian Women Writers in English

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Nature and human race have, always, shared kinship which is reflected in the works of Indian writers and more especially in Indian women writers. It is the environment that fosters human attitudes in the natural writing. Right from the beginning, nature has been the perennial source of life and energy for human race and plant kingdom. In this context Eco psychology studies the relationship between human beings and the natural world through ecological and psychological principles. It is based on the idea that human have an in-built connection to the natural environment. It seeks to help people to explore this connection and restore the bond where it may have been broken. The field seeks to develop and understand ways of expanding the emotional connection between individuals and the natural world, thereby assisting individuals with sustainable lifestyles and remedying alienation from nature. The term Eco psychology was coined by Theodore Roszak in 1992 in his book *The Voice of the Earth*. The term is also known by other names which include Gaia psychology, psychoecology, ecotherapy, environmental psychology, green psychology, global therapy, green therapy, Earth -centered therapy, ecosophy and sylvan therapy. Ecopsychology explores how to develop emotional bonds with nature. It considers this to be worthwhile because when nature is explored and viewed without judgment, it gives the sensations of harmony, balance, timelessness and stability. Ecopsychologists have begun detecting unspoken grief within individuals, an escalation of pain and despair, felt in response to widespread environmental destruction. It also believes that without the influence of nature, humans are prone to variety of delusions.

The applications of ecopsychology are offered to help improve well-being. Ecopsychology techniques are thought to produce improvements in mood well-being and an increased ability to cope. This paper proposes to trace the ecopsychological concerns in the works of select Indian women writers. To begin with Anita Desai one of the prolific writers of the present time is outstandingly marvelous who derives her images from the variety of sources from nature. She has used

nature literally or metaphorically to describe the human conditions and predicament. She has used clusters of images to peep into the minds of Nanda Kaul, Raka and Ila Das. The nature images such as birds, flowers, plants, trees, stones, sea, fruits and poetry are used to explore the minds of these characters. By means of imagery, Anita Desai brings abstract, indefinable situations and elusive character traits down to the level of tangible reality.

The novelist explores the women protagonists' helpless situation through nature imagery. The acute exploration of women's psychic nature is possible to describe with the help of the nature. Nature and women share several common things related to creation and destruction.

Nature is used literally or metaphorically to probe into the psyche of the characters discussed in the novels. There is a bounteous use of nature imagery and interior monologues to demonstrate the perpetual inner conflicts and bland deportments of characters. Ecopsychology foregrounds the representation of nature and attitude towards nature and in this context the whole novel is replete with the delineation of nature, variety of animals, birds and trees. Raka's attitude towards her physical environment is very friendly and she seeks solace amidst it and does not expect people around her but wilderness for which she would disappear suddenly, silently and when she would return "her brown legs scratched her eyes very still and thoughtful as though she had visited strange lands and seen fantastic, improbable things that lingered in the mind". They both lived in the same dry and serene ambience but with different perspectives, on one hand Raka is enjoying this solitude naturally and nonchalantly." If Nanda Kaul was recluse out of vengeance for a long life of duty and obligation, her great grand daughter was a recluse by nature, by instinct". Nanda Kaul's close link with Nature, the pine trees and the cicadas, her intense disinclination to receive any letters, and her irritation at the very sight of the postman unfold her principal attributes in relation to the natural and the human world.

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Nanda Kaul had reached such a stage in her life-old age, infirmity, resignation, loneliness, with drawl, non-involvement- that she felt much closer to the trees than to any human being.

"To be a tree, no more and no less, was all she was prepared to undertake".

In the lap of nature they tend to fulfill the innermost urges and desires. The garden of Carignano is a projection of Nanda Kaul's yearning for loneliness and privacy. The fresh fragrance of the flowers refreshes her as she walks across the lawn. She enjoys the sight of the phlox bloomed in a border edging the lawn. They are close, white and fresh giving out a scent of "freshness and cool". Even Raka her great grandchild wishes to be one with that of nature. She always pines to remain outdoor amidst nature basking in the glory of its sublimity. Nature remains always a sense of wonder and awe-inspiring to Raka where she forgets her loneliness, fatigue and frets of the metropolis city.

In Namita Gokhale's *Shakuntala: The play of Memory* (2005) the Shakuntala, the protagonist is born into a poor "vanvasi" family, who live near the forests of the mountainous areas in India. She grows up roaming the woods, and spends her time watching clouds and birds. Shakuntala caught up in patriarchal vicissitudes, is often chided by her mother for trivial things and whereby the latter shows love, care and concern only to Shakuntala's brother Govinda. Shakuntala feels burdened by the oppressive dominance of her mother who always insisted on her confirming to the traditional way of life. She finds for herself an alternate way of expressing her feelings: she takes to visiting the forest alone, watch the hawks and eagles, count the clouds and give them shapes and names. She can see "elephant trumpeting in the sky and a fluffed rabbit". Shakuntala with her artistic sensibility for nature reveals to her the power of creativity. She finds her joys by keeping herself engaged in the company of nature." All day I roamed the hills, where the forests abound with deer and stag, where tigers and panther prowls" The company of her mother and her house irritates her. Her marriage with Srijan provides a rare degree of freedom: she says "I could swim in the river when I pleased, climb the trees in the forest in search of bird nests, and rest in grassy meadows to stare at the sky and dream". Her expectations from marriage were to see the world, to wander with the freedom of birds and clouds, which ends with the rigid code of conduct imposed by Srijan. But Shakuntala's fascination

towards nature is something exceptional where she begets lots of respite and recluse from the natural objects in and around her.

In the *Book of Shadows*, Rachita Tiwari is the protagonist whose face is ravaged by an acid attack. After this bitter incident she alienates herself from her familiar surroundings in the city of Delhi and retreats to the hills to nurse her physically and mentally wounded self "to heal, to hide, to forget". Her choice to live alone in solitude and soliloquy' is coupled with pain and loneliness. After she gets discharged from the hospital, Delhi appeared a wilderness of heartbreak and pain. The disfigurement of her face leads her to live a life away from the crowd in the old hill house. Her days are spent reading, listening to Lohaniju's tales and taking walks in the nearby forests. She attempts to fight the fears that confront her both consciously and unconsciously. Rachita's sojourn in the mountains is filled with pensive and philosophical thoughts which pervade the novel right from the first page when she relates herself to the old house situated amidst hills and mountains.

This house belongs to me, as I belong to this house. We have closed ranks together, me and the house. We have become as one spirit; it is us against the world. All day I sit and stare at the blinding shadows of the snows, I sit here by the window and shelter in the certainty of these presences, so different from the bewildering world below.

Rachita is in a state of a confusion and disorientation. She is unable to come to terms with her disfigured self and looking into a mirror is an impossible and torturous step. She cuts off all ties from her fast paced city life and society, preferring to spend her time in "solitude and soliloquy to come to terms with what had happened". She comes to the hills "to heal, to hide, to forget. To forgive, to be forgiven". Walking and just being in nature is one of the most often quoted ways that people say they manage their stress and also connect to something 'bigger than themselves'. Ecopsychology is the study of this fundamental relationship and how we might develop this to further support themselves. One of the practitioners at Penny Brohn Cancer Care we have always accessed nature as a part of our services as a place of contemplation, mindfulness, healing and relaxation. we offer simple but effective techniques to support people in further integrating the relationship with the natural world into their ongoing recovery and healing". Similarly Rachita's retreat to the house

on the hill can be termed as a return to the Real, where she breaks away from all human contact and socialization and confines herself to the silence and peace of the house, surrounded by surreal images and the occasional interactions with Lohaniju, the servant cum guardian. Rachita's life before her arrival at the house, dwelt in the realm of the symbolic where there was dissatisfaction and a sense of absence and loss. The house gives her a sense of belonging and a refuge from all the tormentors in the world of her "reality".

"My mother was from these mountains, and I knew this house as a child, spent many happy summers here. I already belong to it. It has taken me in, enveloped my hurt. It soothes my hatred, hushes my sorrow. It had been hostile at first, angry that we had forgotten the sanctuary of its love. This old and gentle house was a repository of my youth, the custodian of my dreams. I had been happy here as a child, and I am determined to be that again; and to restore her life to its own course once again".

Sampath Chawla, the Protagonist of the Novel *Hullabaloo* in Guava orchard runs away from home and takes shelter in guava orchard. In its pure unpolluted state nature contains all the energetic and spiritual elements needed for life and vitality. Beautiful nature helps for spiritual enlightenment of any normal person. Sampath was an eccentric person. He escaped from world of responsibilities and entered into orchard for peace and contentment. Orchard was extremely beautiful and peaceful. He observed that there was silence held between branches like a prayer. As Sampath climbed on Guava tree, he felt his breathing slow and a wave of peace and contentment overtook him.

"All about him the orchard was spangled with the sunshine of a November afternoon webbed by the reflections of the shifting foliage and filled with liquid intricacy of Sun and Shadow. The warmth nuzzled against his cheek like the muzzle of an animal and, as his heartbeat grew quiet, he could hear the soft popping and rustling of plants being warmed to their different scents all about him. How beautiful it was here, how exactly as it should be".

Beautiful and peaceful atmosphere of Orchard hold Sampath spellbound. Sampath becomes a popular sage. Orchard turns into religious and holy place. He gave the sermon in the guava tree. Towns people worshipped Sampath taking him as rise spirit of unfathomable wisdom. There were Himalayan foothills looking extremely beautiful. There were

butterflies that fluttered through the landscape. It is believed that Sampath was in womb there were ecological inklings of various spices, trees, flowers, fishes and other elements of nature. All those things were deeply instilled in his mind body. Now when he came in the company of orchard his consciousness filled with enjoying every minute elements of nature. Nature in the novel becomes a symbol of freedom where Sampath gets peace and contentment. Orchard became source of pleasure and happy solitude. Beautiful trees, birds, coolness of orchard created a desire in Sampath to swallow all that pleasantness so that he can be permanently happy. All characters wander and live in orchard which is main place of all events and hullabaloo as suggested in the title. Orchard has rich ecological wealth and acts as a catalyst providing peace, contentment and happiness to the restive minds of the various characters.

In another novel of Kiran Desai's *Inheritance of loss* (2006) Sai, the protagonist is an orphan who retreats to India to take refuge under the patronage of her grandfather who is a Cambridge returned retired judge who takes shelter in a cottage at the foothills of the Himalayan Mountains. The novel illuminates the pain of exile, the ambiguities of post-colonialism and the blinding drive for "better life" when one person's wealth means another's poverty. Almost every character in the novel finds recluse amidst nature that is surrounded by the beauty of the Mount Kanchenjunga with its "wizard phosphorescence". The place they dwell is preoccupied by rich natural settings where the beautiful treasure of nature can be easily enjoyed. It is an old house and stands in true testimony of contemporary eco-friendly architect where one can receive maximum of nature's blessings. Nature proves to be a source of energy to Sai, the Judge. They are involved in their activities and simultaneously enjoying the pleasures of natural beauty. Nature influences them to act and react in the existing circumstances and also as active entities in the total planning of nature. In fact the love between Sai and Gyan blooms amidst nature. Nature promotes that sensibility which is the foundation of human love and can invoke passions that can perpetuate human relationship. The love story of Sai and Gyan, her mathematics teacher gets refreshed time to time by the tender touches of nature. Both of them love to enjoy the beauties of nature and feel enlightened in its lap. Gyan "enjoyed the walk to Cho Oyu and experienced a refreshing and simple happiness, although knows no bounds in the monsoon months. Nature is the source of enormous energy, provided we aspire to use it. In the world of today, man suffers

from the permanent fatigue syndrome and to overcome it, the easiest way is the lap of nature, where nature would heal our impaired faculties and rejuvenate us for further efforts. The judge takes a virtual walk in the nature to be relieved of his trepidations preoccupied in his mind. The nature provides him with the impetus with which he can fight with himself and may overcome his weakness. Nature has been interwoven with text in such an artistic manner that it has become a persistent presence guiding, motivating, inspiring and enlightening those who read it. Many have recognized transpersonal experiences in natural settings and found qualities of peace, joy, love support, inspiration and communion with the natural world that are exemplars of the spiritual quest.

It shows how nature provides humans especially women the vehicle, the vocabulary or the idiom for expressing human predicaments and circumstances. It also tries to delineate that at the back drop of nature, women are not just passive entities but creative enough to strive forward for the maintenance and sustenance of the whole being on the earth.

**Conflict of Interest:** Nil

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