

I. Aestheticization of Environment in Silko's *Gardens in the Dunes*

Ecocriticism, as an integral part of environmental movement that began with the celebration of Earth Day on April 22 1970, deals with the aestheticization of environment and other related issues in the field of art and literature. Environmental movement believes in human-nature harmony. It goes against the human encroachment of the natural world. It calls for the protection of the natural resources and conservation of all the species. Human beings are part of nature and so they must respect and preserve the nature. It is what the ecologists and all the ecoconscious human beings believe. Ecologists want to see humans in good terms with nature. They do not admit that human beings and nature are different. Human beings are part of natural environment and so they must not live against but in accordance with nature and natural ethos. Thus, the ecologists speak for human harmony with nature as a new value necessary to the present world.

Environment does not limit itself to the environmental science and environmentalists alone. Rather, it has become subject matter of other disciplines or humanitarian scholars. It encompasses all the social, political and academic institutions as the "awareness of the environment" or "ecoconsciousness" includes everyone and everything in the world.

In literary criticism, Ecocritical School studies the environmental issues in the literary texts. Ecocriticism, very recently, has emerged as a critical school which focuses on the earth that is on coexistence. While other literary theories, in general, examine the relation between writer, texts and the world, ecocriticism gives emphasis on nature, natural entities and the earth as a whole and their relation with the text. It admits Barry Commoner' first law of ecology which states "everything is connected to

everything else" (33). Ecocriticism advocates for unanimous and strong union with ecosphere or nature.

Ecocritical criticism addresses environmental considerations. It includes ecological theory, environmental justice, human /nature dichotomy and related concerns. Moving beyond feeling, emotion and imagination, ecological readings focus on the questions of universe or the cosmos. Ecocriticism talks about the relationship of the species to the cosmos, human existence, organism's growth and physical and spiritual cosmic relations.

Ecocriticism rests on the principle of "earth-centredness ".Ecocritics believe that all the branches of knowledge have some sort of relation to the ecosphere. They cannot go away from the ecospheric implications. Every knowledge or discipline follows the earth. In this way, earth works as a "point of reference" for the understanding of art, literature, philosophy, culture, religion, politics and all other disciplines.

The major slogan of ecocriticism is "knowing the Earth". It does not tend towards discussing about the earth alone but understanding the cosmos in a whole. The proper knowledge of the earth lies not in parts but in whole. Hence, ecological studies lead us towards knowing the earth holistically. It means seeing in a single life all the biotic and abiotic constituents of the ecosphere.

Ecocritical criticism has come up as a response to human indifference towards the earth. People preferred socio-cultural contexts to environmental concerns. They took the wilderness secondary to the human world. Ecocriticism rejects this human-centered view along with its establishment of the ecocentric vision of the world. Earth is source of all lives and it is the essence of our existence. So we need to

concentrate on the environmental issues. We have to pay our due respect to the natural world in which we exist. This view develops the idea of environmental ethics.

Environmental ethics is the field of inquiry used to evaluate the ethical responsibilities of human beings towards the natural world. It talks about the appropriate human moral attitudes towards nature and natural ecosystems. For this reason, environmental ethics goes against anthropocentrism in favour of ecocentrism.

Ecocentrism rests on the belief that the natural world has intrinsic value. All organisms have "inherent worth" within themselves and human beings should not judge nature in terms of their needs and interests. In this regard, Paul W. Taylor in his "The Ethics of Respect for Nature" explains:

In so far as we regard any organism, species population or life community as entity having inherent worth, we believe that it must never be treated as if it were a mere object or thing whose entire value lies in being instrumental to the good of some other entity. The well being of each is judged to have value in and of itself. (354)

Thus, the idea of "intrinsic value" promotes human respect and moral obligation towards nature. This moral relation with the wild species and the wilderness helps to maintain a healthy existence in a natural state.

Similarly ecocriticism develops the concept of "land ethic" that also attempts to extend a moral concern towards the natural world. Land ethic is based on the belief that all living creatures have a common origin and history on the earth, and they are ecologically connected and interdependent. This view considers humans as members of a large family that includes all the species of the planet. This concept of family results in human responsibility and respect for nature.

The Land ethic takes the earth as a biotic community. It includes soils, waters, plants and animals along with human beings. These all are the interdependent components of the community. This view has turned down humans to members from the position of the masters in the team. For instance, Aldo Leopold claims, "A Land ethic changes the role of *homo sapiens* from conqueror of the land-community to plain member and citizen of it. It implies respect for his fellow-members, and respect for the community as such" (434).

Hence, Ecocriticism delves into the various environmental issues and human relation to them. It aims at promoting the health of earth and keeping good connection between human and natural world. Ecocriticism reexamines all the cultural differences man has built against the environment. Moreover, Ecocritical School of thought begins on the verge of ecocrisis with its noble purpose to establish harmonious relationship between human and nature.

The environment or nature takes place in the literature of all the place and time. However, the "place of place" in literature was not dominant until the Romanticism broke out in Europe. It brought literature from the city to the forest or human society to the natural community. Wordsworth covers "Lake District" in his poetry and describes the woods, mountains, rivers, cataracts, flowers, birds, clouds, and rain etc. He celebrates these eco-entities as he finds pleasure, peace, and unity in them. Wordsworth stands against division, separateness, and isolation. He sees human beings' joy and existence in the state of harmony of balance, which results in the perfect communion between human beings and ecosphere.

Similarly, the transcendentalists, Emerson, and Thoreau have a deep respect for nature. They consider nature as a religion, and birds, clouds, trees, and all the natural world have a special meaning for them. The transcendentalists see nature not

only as something to be used but as something more than it. They view man's relationship with nature should be beyond the idea of usefulness. Thoreau's *Walden* speaks of the woods, plants and insects etc and human relationship with them. Thus, both the Romanticism and Transcendentalism celebrate nature as a thing of high value. This helps to keep human beings in a good relation with nature that is very significant to save earth in its time of critical condition.

The theme of nature or environmental awareness permeates through the various writings of modern literature too. These writings cover ecoconsciousness and aim at knowing the earth in terms of its pattern and system. Just as civil rights and women's liberation movement started in the Sixties and Seventies, environmental movement started in the Seventies in America to meet with the ecological crisis. The movement leads to the emergence of ecocritical school of thought in the 1990s which attempts to deal with the literary texts in terms of their relation to the natural world. Ecocriticism claims that all the literatures of the world, whether ancient or modern, have some ecological implications, and it looks for the ecological concerns or the ecoconsciousness in the literary texts. Thus, literature of any time, western or non-western, keeps close relationship with earth.

Similarly, Native American literature is also rich in its connection with the natural world. Silko is one of the prominent Native American writers who gives an emphasis on human being's necessity to be in a state of balance and harmony with their natural surroundings. For her, human beings are natural and they are part of the natural world. And from the moment they try to separate themselves from nature, the disaster occurs. Silko blames Christianity and the modern European civilization that have tried to separate human beings from nature. We can see this theme recurring in her works.

Silko addresses the role of rituals and myths in Native American life that help people to survive and grow. Most interestingly, the rituals are in tune with nature. She develops the theme in her masterpiece *Ceremony* (1977) in which the war veteran, Tayo recovers slowly after his gradual reconnection with nature that he has lost due to his involvement in the war. Tayo shows sympathy to the rivers, trees, cattle, and wild animals the Whites destroy indiscriminately, and at the same time, he integrates himself with all these natural forms. Thus, through the environmental values of Native American cultures, Silko speaks for human love with nature that connects human and non-human world together. Since, human beings' origin depends upon environment, they are the part of the whole existence. Silko puts forwards similar idea in *Ceremony* as she says, "This is where we came from, see. This sand, this stone, these trees, the vines, all the wild flowers. This earth keeps us going" (45).

Silko talks about the world where all the living and non-living things are of equal value. They play an equally important role to keep on the environment in a balanced and harmonious state. In this regard, Silko in her essay "Landscape, History and the Pueblo Imagination" points out, "Survival depends upon harmony and cooperation, not only among human beings but among all things-the animate and less animate" (1006).

Silko presents her love and respect for environment or the natural world in her novel *Gardens in the Dunes*. She highlights the human need to maintain harmonious relation with nature. Nature is all in all for her, and she cannot imagine a healthy and happy world for human beings to the exclusion of nature. Her characters are deeply interlocked with the natural world and they can not choose anything other than the natural entities for their pleasure and satisfaction.

Silko presents the two opposing world views towards nature: the western technological and mechanistic, and the Native American ethical and spiritual. The Whites' ill-treatment with the plants and the land for their material purposes contrast to the Native Americans' kind and loving regard to the earth. While the western view of nature brings hazard to the health of both the nature and human beings, the Native American identity and integration with nature bears harmony.

The novel is set around the American south west in the early 1900s when White encroachment into the West was at an accelerating rate. Silko focuses on a three-generation household of Sand Lizard women – Indigo, Sister Salt, their mother and their grandmother – trying to survive amid the great changes in their physical and social life. Native people are in trouble. Chemehuevis, Walapais, Paiutes, Mojaves and Sand Lizards – all these native tribes are being run out of their homelands. The Whites in the form of missionaries, farmers, tourists, and construction workers pour into the West and begin to exploit the nature and the natives. The natives have to live either in the reservations or in service to local Whites. The white interference separates Indigo, Sister Salt, and their mother. They lose their homeland, the dunes garden and the family unit. Throughout the novel, the two sisters struggle to reunite and finally reach their homeland, the old gardens. Though, Indigo tours the western world with a White woman, Hatie Palmer, her rescuer, she never forgets the corn, beans, squash, datura, and sunflowers in the old garden. Moreover, her love and respect for the plants and animals of the old gardens become stronger. Thus, Silko contrasts the White anti-environmental values to the Native Americans' environment-friendly attitudes towards nature. She speaks for the Native Americans' deep reverence and care towards the natural world.

The novel begins and ends in homeland. Homeland is a main issue in the novel. Throughout the novel, the two sisters, Indigo and Sister Salt struggle to achieve that. This home has a larger meaning. It is a natural world where the plants bloom, the animals play and human beings pay proper respect to the earth. Frederic Luis Aldama claims, "Home for Silko is not about racial Solidarity. It is about seeking out like-minded peoples who [. . .] share a deep commitment to the earth and the human spirit" (5).

Silko's *Gardens in the Dunes* deals with human-nature relationship which makes the world complete and harmonious. The novel sheds light on how easily the contact with land and animals brings happiness and order in the girls' lives, once displaced and alienated from the natural world. We see the plants and animals all over the novel. The diversity of life has close link to human beings. In this regard, Jacquelyn Ross argues that Silko has displayed an inseparable bond between the lives of the Sand Lizards, the Native Americans, and the flora and fauna of the land. She posits, "True to form, Silko tackles several themes at once, not the least of which is the story of plants. The plant world in the Dunes garden is enmeshed in every way with the life of the Sand Lizards and animals of the area" (7).

Native American life is closely linked to nature. Native Americans cannot separate them from the world of plants and animals. In other words, nature is the other side of their life. Hence Native Americans have deep connections with the land on which they live. For example; N.S.Momaday comments:

[. . .] the Indian has assumed a deep ethical regard for the earth and sky, a reverence for the natural world that is antipodal to strange tenet of modern civilization which seemingly has it that man must destroy his environment. It is this ancient ethic of the Native American that

must shape our efforts to preserve the earth and the life upon it and within it. (40)

Here, Momaday focuses on the Native American ethos for the respect and protection of the natural world. Their attachment with nature does not seem to be logical or reasonable for the present modern world. But it is ethical or spiritual. They do not exercise reason but believe on the creative force of nature. This belief leads them to respect and protect the nature.

Similarly, regarding the Native American characters' relationship with the land, Tayari Jones remarks, "They survive by gardening the sandy soil. In this garden, they welcome snakes and rever them as the providers of life sustaining waters" (3).

In the same way, Silko develops the idea of this kind in her novel *Gardens in the Dunes*, "If people killed the snake, the precious water disappeared, Grandma Fleet said. Whatever you do, do not offend the old snake, who lives at the spring" (38).

This strengthens the point that human beings depend on the land or nature for their existence. So they have to provide space to all ecoentities for harmonious balance. Native Americans respect the snakes and believe that they provide waters for human beings. This may not be true that snakes provide water but it is true that snakes make a part of ecosystem. So they may not have direct but must have indirect link to the water resources. Thus, this Native American belief may be unscientific but not unreasonable as it helps to keep on harmony between human and nature.

Discussing the similar Native American attachment with the natural world, Richard Botzler states:

Native American cultures are often viewed as a source of moral insights on human relationship to the environment [. . .] a strong sense of identity with a specific geographic feature such as a river or

mountain; the notion that all the world is enspirited and has being, life and self-consciousness; and a strong sense of kinship with the natural world. Such Native American views are commonly associated with reduced environmental impacts and harmonious relationship with the natural world. (287)

Silko develops this idea of kinship with the natural world in *Gardens in the Dunes*. The Native American characters – Indigo, Sister Salt and Grandma – identify themselves with the flora and fauna of the dunes garden. They see spirit and life in nature. They view nature as a part of their life and existence. Native Americans do not see nature in fragments but in totality. All the natural entities combine themselves in a close relationship to make a whole. Sense of wholeness is the basis of harmony between human and nature. For instance, Donna L. Potts posits:

The sense of wholeness is extended to the Native American relation to the natural world, both animate and inanimate, the modern western way of defining self and the world in terms of fragmentation and disunity is foreign to the Native American sensibility. (496)

The Native Americans do not see the nature in parts but as sum of the parts. They see the "whole" in nature. This leads them to respect and protect the every part. This helps every species exist and live healthy life that results in the continuity of ecosystem. This concept of "holistic" nature contributes to maintain harmony between human and nature. Silko strongly advocates the same theme in *Gardens in the Dunes*.

II. Ecocriticism

Ecocriticism, a branch of green studies, considers the relationship between human and non-human life as represented in the literary texts. Non-human life includes all the biotic and abiotic forms such as water, plants, rocks, hills, insects, and wild animals etc. Non-human life in a way constructs the environment in which human life exists. Ecocriticism seeks to study this relationship in the literary texts.

The relationship between human and nature takes place in the literature of every time and every culture. Many literary works contain concrete physical images such as mountains, springs, high hills, dark woods, and wild animals etc. Moreover, these literary works show the interaction between human and natural world, especially human treatment of nature. The eco-elements in the literary works may provoke a sense of love and affection toward natural objects that help bring friendly relation between human and nature. Hence, ecocriticism seeks human sensibility to the natural entities.

Ecocriticism attempts to apply ecological concepts to literary studies. This ecological concept is a way of raising "awareness about the dwelling place" in literary texts. This kind of awareness is the knowledge that we get about the land or environment. The Knowledge about the dwelling place in the literary text is similar to knowing the place or earth. Thus, ecocriticism informs us about the organisms of the natural world and the mechanism of the earth as a whole.

Ecocriticism theorizes about the place of literature in the struggle against environmental degradation. Literature brings "ecological consciousness" in its territory and talks about the conditions of the earth and non – human as well as human life. For instance, Joseph Meeker in his book, *The Comedy of Survival: Studies in Literary Ecology*, states:

Human beings are earth's only literary creatures [...] If the creation of literature is an important characteristic of the human species, it should be examined carefully and honestly to discover its influence upon human behavior and the natural environment – to determine what role, if any, it plays in the welfare and survival and man kind what insight it offers into human relationship with other species and with the world around us. (qtd. in Love 25)

Thus, literature helps extend ecological consciousness by reexamining human treatment of nature. And it inspires to build a society where human beings keep fair and harmonious relation with nature. In this way, ecocriticism highlights the significant role of literature in the struggle against environmental destruction.

The presence of natural world in literary texts is not a current phenomenon. The study of literature's relationship to the physical world has been with us in the form of pastoral tradition for a long time. And the fiction, poetry, and essays of the British and American Romantics have always had a place in the literary spectrum. But as a distinct environmentalist criticism with its commitment to the environmental issues, it seemed to have first emerged in the 1960s. Environmental movement began, in the Sixties, within widespread public concerns over nuclear annihilation, rapid population growth, loss of wild and natural areas, extinction of species, and increasing contamination of air, water, and land. Ecocritical school of thought germinated, with its ecological consciousness, on the foundation of the environmental movement. And it began to develop as a literary theory in the 1990s, with its own professional organization, the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment [ASLE] and with its own literary journal, *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment* [ISLE]. Cheryll Glotfelty's *The Ecocriticism Reader* (1996) is a major

step in organizing the field and bringing ecocriticism as a distinct movement. Before its publication, ecocriticism had no real home, no real identity and it was not recognized as a distinct critical school or movement. Instead, as Glotfelty points out, ecocritical voices appear under the headings as varied "as American Studies, regionalism, pastoralism, the frontier, human ecology, science, and literature, nature in literature, landscape in literature " (xvii).

Ecocriticism is a name that implies ecological literacy. It celebrates nature advocating the nature's original status. 'Eco' and 'Critic' both come from Greek 'Oikos' and 'Kritis' , and together they mean 'house judge'. It may surprise many lovers of outdoor writing. But in alien the 'Oikos' is nature or 'Widest home' and the 'kritis' is "an arbiter of taste who wants the house kept in good order, no boots or dishes strewn about to ruin the original decor" (Howarth 69).

Ecocriticism speaks about the reciprocal relationship between human beings and the land they exploit to survive. This interaction between human and non-human world is the primary focus of the ecocritical studies. Man cannot stay beyond the environment. All the living and non-living things depend upon each other for the continuation and existence of their lives. Ecocriticism admits Barry Commoner's first law of ecology "everything is connected to everything else"(33). It is the fact that everything in the world is interconnected and interdependent. Barry Commoner in his *The Closing Circle: Nature, Man and Technology* elaborates:

Each living species is also linked to many others [. . .] And animal, such as a deer, may depend on plants for food; the plants depend on the action of soil bacteria for their nutrients; the bacteria in turn live on the organic wastes dropped by the animals on the soil. At the same time, the deer is food for the mountain lion. [. . .] Fungi degrade the bodies

of dead plants and animals. All this many times multiplied and organized species by species in intricate, precise relationships, makes up the vast network of life on the earth. (32)

This kind of interconnection shows the role of each eco-element in the environment since they all work as the significant and necessary ingredients of earthly system.

Ecocriticism deals with the same interconnectedness among the living and non-living things in the environment.

Ecocriticism deals with literature with an environmental viewpoint. It looks at the eco-elements and human beings' relation with them in a literary text. Richard Kerridge in his "Environmentalism and Ecocriticism" remarks, "Texts are evaluated in terms of their environmentally harmful or helpful effects. Beliefs and ideologies are assessed for their environmental implications" (530). Thus, Ecocriticism talks about the environmental consequences that result in human beings' behaviour with environment. Hence, Ecocriticism examines only environmental concerns in literature. In this regard, Cheryl Glotfelty in points out:

[...] Ecocriticism is the study of relationship between literature and the physical environment. Just as Feministic criticism examines language and literature from a gender-consciousness perspective and Marxist criticism brings an awareness of modes of production and economic class to its reading of texts, ecocriticism takes an earth-centered approached to literary studies. (xviii)

So, like other literary theories, it does not examine the relations between writers, texts and the world. For ecocriticism, "the world" does not confine itself with the society but includes the whole ecosphere. In this way, ecocriticism studies the nature, natural phenomena or the whole environmental system in the literary texts.

Ecocriticism often seems to have been defined as a subfield of American literature. But in fact, ecocriticism has nothing specially to do with American literature. This does not mean that ecocriticism does not deal with American literature. Of course, it has a good relationship with American literature. But the fact that it is more closely linked to the American than any other literature is not justifiable. Nature writing takes place in the literatures of the world. For example, Western Europe and Latin America have long tradition of nature writing. So is the case with the countries such as China, Japan and India. Jean Arnold, in the letter on PMLA posits:

Far from being American, ecocriticism encompasses the very earth it studies, assuming its size and shape. Imagine literature courses that explore readings of gender in relation to nature; imagine courses that cover Native American, Asian, African, Hispanic, or other traditions and draw on their literatures depicting views of nature. Studying diverse interactions with the natural world can expand cross-cultural understandings enormously. (1090)

The term "nature" has been defined differently in the different cultures and tradition. Some cultures see nature as the wilderness untouched by human kind, but for others nature includes cultivated rural areas and yet for some others, it also covers the historical heritage of monuments and buildings. Ecocriticism examines how the concepts of nature are constructed in different cultures and expressed through a variety of literary practices. Thus, ecocriticism is not uniquely American literature but a world literature.

Ecocriticism deals with "nature writing". However, it has nothing specifically to do with nature writing. But this does not mean that ecocriticism has no relation

with nature writing. Obviously it has. But ecocriticism is not limited on setting, character or the outward description of the nature only. Ecocriticism does not catch the sight of a leaf or flower alone but observes the root or the system as a whole and its relationship with other creatures and the human beings. Ursula K.Heise in the letter on "Forum on Literatures of the Environment" states:

Ecocriticism analyzes the ways in which literature represents the human relations to nature at particular moments of history, what values are assigned to nature and why, and how perceptions of the natural shape literary tropes and genres. In turn, it examines how such literary figures contribute to shaping social and cultural attitudes towards environment. (1097)

Therefore, ecocriticism deals with nature writing differently. It observes the relation human beings have maintained with nature and the values human societies have given to the natural world. And above all, ecocriticism looks for human attitudes towards nature and how they influence the environmental conditions.

Ecocriticism is not limited to nature writing alone. Again, this does not imply that ecocriticism has nothing to do with literature. But ecocriticism is not limited to literature. Moreover, it gives a strong connection with other disciplines. It is interdisciplinary in nature. And ecocriticism links itself not only with written texts but also different media such as photography and the documentary, film and the other disciplines such as history, art, anthropology and philosophy etc.

Just as ecocriticism seeks for the relationship or the interconnection of the natural species, it keeps close relationship with other academic disciplines too. Literature combines itself with biology, cultural theory, bio-chemistry, art, ecology, history, politics, philosophy, and other sciences too. These sciences in one way or

another, talks about the plants and animals and their relation to human world. In other words, they are also parts of ecology. Because no human sciences remain away from the natural and environmental issues, they do not stay outside the ecocritical periphery. In this regard, Patric D. Murphy in "Forum on Literatures of the Environment" posits:

Often literary ecocriticism relies not only on the insights of literary studies to analyze fictional and non-fictional prose, poetry, and drama but also on those of environmental studies, environmental history, postmodern geography, neurobiology, cognitive rhetoric and a host of other related disciplines. Along with this type of interdisciplinarity, we are witnessing ecocriticism's alliance with multicultural studies and postcolonial studies, particularly in the arena of environmental justice.

(1097)

Ecocriticism is not a unitary but a semi overlapping project. It welcomes all the perspectives in its territory to observe the co-existence of living and non-living creatures and their relation as represented in literature. So environmental literature practises multiple perspectives towards reading a text. Lawrence Buell in his letter on PMLA describes the congeries of six overlapping projects to clarify ecocriticism as an interdisciplinary field :

(1) consideration of the possibilities of certain forms of scientific inquiry (e.g., ecology and evolutionary biology) and social scientific inquiry (e.g., geography and social ecology) as models of literary reflection; (2) textual, theoretical, and historical analysis of the platial basis of human experience; (3) study of literature as a environmental-ethical reflection-for example, as a critique of anthropocentric

assumptions; (4) retheorization of mimesis and referentiality, especially as applied to literary representation of physical environment in literary texts; (5) study of rhetoric (e.g., its ideological valences of gender, race, politics) of any and all most of environmental discourse, including creative writing but extending across the academic disciplines and (indeed even more important) beyond them into the public sphere, especially the media, governmental institutions, corporation organizations, and environmental advocacy groups; and (6) inquiry into the relation of (environmental) writing to life and pedagogical practice. (1091)

Thus, ecocriticism gives a balance of all the things such as species of the earth, critical practices, scientific inquiry and spiritual beliefs. There is no branch of knowledge that ecocriticism does not touch. It gathers all the perspectives together and combines itself with any discipline.

Ecocriticism seems to have emerged from the present environmental crisis and need to redeem the world from the crisis. Man has polluted the environment to a large degree and the pollution (the contamination of air, earth, rivers, and sea etc) is for the most part irrecoverable. This has put both the man and the nature at risk and the previous balance is going to be weaker. Thus, ecocriticism aims at changing the present environmental scenario to bring harmonious balance between human and nature. Jonathan Levin in his letter on "Forum on Literatures of the Environment" opines:

Ecocritical dialogue often aims at nothing less than the transformation of human environmental and ecological consciousness [. . .] guiding the historically egocentric western imagination – man a little lower

than the angels but well above the rest of earthly creation, imposing rationale design to improve his earthly habitat – toward a newly emerging ecocentric paradigm with its deeper respect for the integrity of the many other forms of life with which human kinds share the earth. (1097)

Therefore, ecocritical approach considers to extend ecological consciousness among the human individuals. And a man or woman must understand that human is not the controller of the earthly system but a part of it. Ecocriticism arises from the ecocentric vision of paying respect to the all life-forms of the environment. In this sense, ecocriticism comes as an earth-centered perspective against the anthropocentric vision of the human world.

In the past, especially after the introduction of Christianity, anthropocentric perspective of the environment ruled the Western philosophical thought. This perspective gave no intrinsic value to non-human animate or inanimate objects rather look them as the "object of exploitation". Man considered the land as valueless and judged in terms of human needs and satisfactions. Moreover, the modern world, with the growing science and technology began to exploit natural resources in an accelerating rate. Man dominated the natural world for his own use. Ecocriticism is a harsh response to such human tendency of being superior to nature. Ecocriticism advocates human- nature harmony in which both the human and nature can co-exist and cooperate. Hence, man does not possess the right to do anything he wants with nature. The trees and rivers, the snakes and snails or the crows and the whales share equal rights with the human beings for their lives and security. Therefore, ecocriticism seems to turn human-centered perspective into the earth-centered one.

Ecocriticism is an earth centered perspective. This does not mean that it boycotts the humanity from its realm and concentrates itself only in the natural world. Of course, it does not ignore the human presence in the nature. Ecocritical approach does not marginalize the human world, and at the same time, it does not centralize the nature too. It takes both the human and non-human world in equal terms. Human beings do not have the right to master over the other natural objects and use the animals and the plants in the way they like. Thus, ecocriticism takes the earth as a system that contains all the species along with the human kind as the equal and inevitable parts. In this way, ecocriticism turns the previous human- centered thought into the earth centered perspective.

Thus, ecocritical school of thought is a new way of looking towards the natural world. It does not distance the natural phenomena from the social and cultural phenomena. Rather, ecocriticism narrows down the gap between human and nature or nature and culture. Through out the Western metaphysics, nature culture duality remains everywhere. The concept that culture always masters over the nature has long directed the Western world inspiring the wars, invasions, pollution, overpopulation and so on. This has caused to bring disharmony between human and nature. Ecocriticism in its effort to establish harmony and a healthy ecosystem, does not look towards nature and culture as separate objects but integrated ones. Nature and culture often overlap as twinned processes. Jean Arnold in his letter on PMLA views:

The view that culture is produced by human beings and is therefore separate from nature bypasses the fact that all human culture resides in the natural world, and that every penny of economic worth ultimately draws on resources of the natural world, and that we owe our very existence to its processes. (1090)

Culture is deeply embedded into the nature. As without natural world, no human world exists, the culture cannot go beyond nature. To accept culture as a separate entity is to avoid the natural reality. It cannot be logical and reasonable in any sense.

Ecocriticism presents nature-culture relationship as a way to understand the natural phenomena, the ecology, and the earth as a whole. Thus, environmental literature does not take nature and culture as the dual terms but as the two sides of the same coin. Both affect each other and can not remain uninfluenced. Dualities like nature versus culture, and wilderness versus the city are constantly breaking down. And the superiority of culture over nature is also falling down. In this regard William Howarth points out, "Although we cast nature and culture as opposites, in fact, they constantly mingle like water and soil in a flowing stream" (69). Thus, nature is as important as the culture is. Ecological studies posit ecosphere to the central point and help to integrate both the nature and the culture two in one. Thus, ecocriticism seeks and enlarges the unique connection between nature, culture, and other things.

Ecocriticism takes on the task of reexamining cultural attitudes towards nature. With the growing technology at hand, human accountability towards nature must increase. Human beings need to be aware of the consequences of their beliefs and actions. And they must recognize that any action towards the natural world is eventually an action toward oneself and toward one's culture. Thus, historical inquiry into past cultural relation to nature is necessary as it can form a vital basis for our understanding. The task of reexamining cultural attitudes towards nature may affect the current environmental thought. It may help build the friendly relation between human and nature. Hence ecocriticism calls for "reexamination" to bring a harmony.

The collapse of nature/culture dualism and the move from anthropocentrism to ecocentrism help establish a new vision of nature. This can be a beginning of a new

religion that is natural religion. This kind of development in human vision increases human regards towards nature. For instance, L. White Jr. in his "The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis" states, "What we do about ecology depends on our ideas of the man-nature relationship. More science and technology are not going to get us out of the present ecological crisis until we find a new religion or rethink our old one" (151).

Thus, ecocriticism talks about a new kind of relationship between man and nature. Like the prechristian spiritual relation between man and nature, it is quite necessary to build up a new concept of the natural world to put the human being in good term with nature. For example, William Rueckert in his "Literature and Ecology" remarks:

The problem now as most ecologists agree is to find ways of keeping of human community from destroying the natural community, and with it the human community. [. . .] The conceptual and practical problem is to find the grounds, upon which the two communities – the human, the natural – can coexist, cooperate and flourish in the biosphere. (107)

A new ecological vision is necessary to conserve the natural world. Man does not possess the right to do anything he wants with nature. Humans should promote the feeling of coexistence and cooperation with the ecosphere. This vision may turn helpful to the health of both the natural and human world.

This develops the idea of land ethic, which considers the whole earth as an environmental community with its members such as the plants and animals along with human beings as parts of nature. And all the things in the environment have a value in themselves to form the environment as a whole. This value is not "economic value" that human beings impose upon the non-human world. Rather, it is an inherent worth

in the eco-elements that forms the environment and life species on it. This view has positioned humans not as a master but member of the community. So man has no right to exploit the natural entities because as a member of the team his existence itself depends upon the existence of other members. Thus, the view of land ethic helps to raise human beings' moral responsibilities towards nature. It promotes human love, respect, and admiration for the nature and a high regard for its value.

The concept of land ethic turns human attention towards the environment. It states that man is not above the environment as human world itself is a part of natural world. Ecocriticism gives much more focus on the ecosphere. In this way, ecocritical school of criticism rejects the anthropocentrism and establishes the biocentric vision of the world. For instance, in his "The Ethics of Respect for Nature", Paul W. Taylor says:

The biocentric outlook on nature has four components. (1) Humans are thought of as members of the Earth's community of life, holding that membership on the same terms as apply to all the nonhuman members. (2) The earth's natural ecosystems as a totality are seen as a complex web of interconnected elements, with the sound biological functioning of each being dependent on the sound biological functioning of the others. (3) Each individual organism is conceived as a teleological center of life, pursuing its own good in its own way, (4) whether we are concerned with standards of merit or with the concept of inherent worth, the claim that humans by their very nature are superior to other species in a groundless claim and, in the right of elements (1), (2), and (3) above, must be rejected as nothing more than an irrational basis in our own favor. (359)

In this way, ecocriticism looks the natural world as an organic whole in which all the species are equally significant parts. And ecocriticism inspires to see the things in connection, harmony, and totality. All the things in the world, living and non-living, have values within themselves and they connect to each other to run the ecosystem well. This view of connection and combination bears the sense of harmony between human and nature.

III. Human-Nature Harmony in Silko's *Gardens in the Dunes*

Silko, in her novel, *Gardens in the Dunes*, displays an interaction between human beings and nature. She presents the two worlds - human and natural - throughout the novel. The natural world, in the novel, covers rivers, mountains, dunes, gardens and various plants and animals. On the other hand, Silko puts human beings at the backdrop of nature and portrays human connection to it.

Silko demonstrates human dependence upon natural world. People cannot live beyond nature. They depend upon nature for their existence. Sand Lizard people, like Indigo and Sister Salt, survive on the old gardens where they grow the plants such as datura, sunflowers, beans, corns and amaranth. The following extract from *Gardens in the Dunes* reveals human interconnection with nature:

The deep sand held precious moisture from run off that nurtured the plants, along the sandstone cliffs above the dunes, dampness seeped out of cracks in the cliff. Amaranth grew profusely at the foot of dunes. When there was nothing else to eat, there was amaranth; every morning and every night Sister Salt boiled up amaranth greens just like Grandma Fleet taught her. (16)

It clarifies that human life relies on the natural world. Here, Sister Salt "boiled up amaranth" to feed herself and she gets life-giving energy from the plant. And Grandma Fleet makes baskets of different shapes by "cutting the yuva strands in different length" (21). She sells the baskets to make her living. Thus, life in every way keeps link to the plant world and it does not seem possible without nature.

As human life depends upon nature, human beings need to keep good relationship with it. The Native American characters in the novel are at good terms with natural world. They do not separate themselves from the nature; rather consider

nature as equal to human beings. Sister Salt, in the novel, remembers what Grandma Fleet tells her about the plants and the relation human beings need to keep with them:

After the rains, they tended the plants that sprouted out the deep sand; they each had plants they cared for as if the plants were babies.

Grandma fleet had taught them this too. The plants listen, she told them. Always greet each plant respectfully. Don't argue or fight around the plants—hard feelings cause the plants to wither. (16)

They take care of the plants individually and behave with the plants as if they were babies. And at the same time, as the plants listen like human beings, they are not below the human world. This rejects the anthropocentric view of the world that takes human beings as superior to the non-humans. By giving human attributes to the plants, Silko develops the value of natural world and human need to preserve it. Native Americans have deep respect towards nature. They believe that hard feelings cause the plants to wither and it reveals their sensitivity towards nature. These are the things that Grandma Fleet tells her grandchildren, Indigo and Sister Salt. She teaches them how to love and care the plants. Thus, an old woman's teaching of love and care to the plants to the young children shows that they possess a culture that is friendly to nature. This bridges a gap between human beings and nature.

In Native American culture, the "Ghost Dance" also keeps close connection to natural world. Its very birth is on the basis of environmental degradation and the need to regenerate it. Paiutes, one of the Native American tribes believes on the Ghost Dance. In *Gardens in the Dunes*, Paiutes along with Sand Lizards and other Native American tribes perform this dance. The Ghost Dance is a religious movement that promises a return of the good life that had existed before the Europeans arrived. Silko explains the Native American belief on the regeneration of the world and states:

[. . .] If the Paiutes and all other Indians danced this dance, then the used up land would be whole again and the elk and herds of buffalo killed off would return. [. . .] if they kept dancing, great storms would purify the Earth of her destroyers. The clear running water and the trees and the grassy plains filled with buffalo and elk would return.

(25)

After the Whites destroy the natural world, nothing remains there: neither the green plants nor the wild animals. It makes the natives feel sad as their existence relies on nature. So they want to bring back the previous natural state and they believe that the performance of "Ghost Dance" will help them to achieve it. Their desire for gaining "clear running water", the "trees" "grassy plains" and the wild animals like "Buffalo" and "elk" reveals their close relationship with the natural world. Thus, Ghost Dance seems to be significant in Native American culture which gives an emphasis on the harmonious relationship with the world in which humans have to live.

Native American culture in every way keeps close link to nature. Their culture and way of living follow the natural world. For instance, the main character in the novel, Indigo is named after a plant. Indigo held out the branch of a tall plant with attractive magenta leaves and says, "This is the plant I am named for" (13). And she gives the name "rainbow" to her parrot. Instead of drawing names from heaven and beyond nature as in many world cultures, Native American way of "naming" reveals that the culture has close connection to nature. In this way, Native American way of life dismisses the nature/ culture binary and establishes them not as separated but as integrated ones. The integration of nature and culture in one helps to maintain harmony between human and nature.

Native American attitude toward nature are eco-friendly. They do not exploit the earth for material purpose. They use the land only to continue their existence. Native American people do not harm to the heart of nature rather pay homage to the land on which they live. On the other hand, European anthropocentrism takes nature as granted and the Whites exploit the nature indiscriminately. We see this kind of overexploitation in the novel as the construction work goes on:

Sister was shocked at the destruction she saw below: the earth was blasted open, the soil moist and red as flesh. The construction workers appeared the size of flies crawling over the hills of clayish dirt. The river had been forced from her bed into deep diversion ditches, where her water ran angry red. Big earth moving machines pulled by teams of mules uprooted groves of ancient cottonwood trees. Off to the west, the workers were digging a huge ditch to carry river water all the way to Los Angeles. (213)

Sister Salt, a Sand Lizard girl, is quite sad to see the destruction of the earth's surface. By changing the route of river, human beings have practised unnatural treatment over the natural processes. Such change of the rivers' route leads to the desertification of the fertile land and the green plants. The "Big earth-moving machines" in the above lines stand for human greed and material craze. They help to uproot the "cottonwood trees" which are the sources of life and existence of the species on earth. With the industrial purpose at hand, humans have forgotten the very sense of their own existence. However, Native Americans show deep love and care to nature. Silko contrasts the European hostility to Native American sensitivity towards the natural world in her *Gardens in the Dunes* and writes:

After the river's course was diverted [...] she tried to care for the natural plants and wild purple on river bank suddenly left high and dry. She called them her flower garden, but the asters died and the datura wilted if she did not carry them buckets of water everyday. She felt sad but resentful too, at the workers who channeled the river away from its bed. (214)

Sister Salt tends the "datura plants" and "asters" on the river bank. She gives life to them having carried buckets of water. She takes the plants as her own flower garden. It reveals how sensitive Native American people are towards the natural garden. They consider the whole nature as their own garden, feel pity on its destruction and take care when it is necessary. This is a striking example to see the European enmity and Native American friendless toward the environment: a Native American girl tends the plants on the river after they wither due to the European interference for their material gain.

Human cruelty over nature does not invite good results. It heralds fatal consequences affecting human life badly. The indiscriminate use of natural resources is the very cause of climate change or natural imbalance. Silko projects this idea very clearly in the novel and states, "The heat that summer exceeded all recorded temperatures in phoenix and Los Angles, rainfall the previous spring was far below normal. Wells in Los Angles and surrounding communities ran dry, and drinking water was brought in by railroad tank cars" (217).

This implies the vulnerable condition of the environment and humans who exist on it. The global warming, low rainfall and desertification of the water sources result in the overexploitation of natural resources. This kind of environmental

degradation causes a serious harm upon the health of both the earth and human beings.

European approach to nature is completely mechanistic and profit-oriented. The Whites deal with nature in terms of the satisfaction of their needs and interests. They do not consider the bad impacts of their actions upon the natural balance. Some white characters, in the novel, seem to have been involved in plant business. They move around the world to collect the plant specimens and run a business over it. This kind of business runs on the merciless exploitation of the plants. Silko's extract below supports how the fierce competition and inhumane treatment over these plants bring an end to their existence:

[. . .] Eliot's only purpose on the expedition was the fire; the fire had been planned months before by the investors, who wished to make certain they possessed the only specimens of "Laelia Cinnabarina". Rival hybridizers would be stymized when they sent out their plant collectors now that this Para River site was destroyed. Habitats for the "Laelia" and "Cattleya" had been disappearing rapidly since the early forties. Now orchid hunters would be forced to go even further up estuaries too overgrown and narrow ever for canoes, where only a few specimens might be found. (144)

This is a scene of Para River in Brazil where plant collectors from America and Europe reach to collect the specimens. We see the growing reduction of the specimens day to day. Human greed and unhealthy competition are rampant. This leads them to set fire on the forest that destroys various plant species. This type of brutality over the natural resources not only pushes the plants into extinction, but also keeps human beings at risk.

Anthropocentrism rules the western world especially after the introduction of Christianity. As Christianity permitted Adam and his children to master over the plants and animals, human beings began to overexploit the natural world without a second thought. However, pre-Christian European ways, like the Native American, were not anthropocentric, rather they were ecocentric. Those values were spiritual or ethical towards nature which helped to keep human beings in tune with nature. Aunt Bronwyn, a white lady in England, loves the "plants", "animals" and even the non-living things like the "stones", and she behaves with them as if they were human beings. She says, "if a garden was not loved, it could not properly grow" (242). This view states that human beings need to treat the natural world the way they do with their fellow beings. Love and respect to the plants is necessary. It inspires the human world to preserve the natural world and achieve harmony between them.

Pre-Christian values are in good terms with nature. They admit that every natural entity, whether biotic or abiotic, has a life or value in itself. For example, Aunt Bronwyn, in the novel, observes life in the stones and she says, "There were stones that turned slowly with the sun to warm both sides of them, and the stones that traveled at night to drink from the river and returned by the morning. There were stones that danced at high noon and stones that danced in the light of the moon!" (254). Here, Silko gives "motion" to the static object like stone. To give motion is similar to give life. Furthermore, Silko gives human attributes to the stones as they "turn", "travel" and "dance" like the human beings and at the same time, these stones need "warmth" and "water" as we humans need. Here, stones and human beings stand in a same line. It cuts the root of anthropocentrism and gives equal value to all the natural entities which work as the components to put the world in harmony.

Pre-Christian tradition of saving the stones resembles Native American attachment with nature. Native Americans are close not only to the natural entities which are useful for them but to all the objects scattered on the earth. Like Aunt Bronwyn, Sister Salt loves the stones and she makes a garden out of them as Silko in the novel states:

Each visit to the big wash, she carried back as many of the colorful pebbles and stones as she could. The colored rocks and pebbles took a great deal of time to arrange but finally she completed the stone garden on the sand outside her tent – a garden that needed no water. (215)

Here, stones form a garden. Generally what we understand about a garden is that it consists of plants. Plants have life. Thus, to build a stone garden is to fill life in the stones. Silko considers stones equal to human beings since they both have the same "life". Therefore, "stone garden" stands as a big irony to the people who take the natural world as lifeless and so, inferior to the human world.

Pre-Christian beliefs and thoughts are environment-friendly. People worship the plants and trees, hills and mountains, rivers and seas or the earth and sky. They show their gratitude to these things as the latter make up their living. They believe that all the human sufferings like famine and war result in human beings' cruelty over natural world. Thus, to destroy the environment is to invite fatal consequences on human destiny. Silko in her *Gardens in the Dunes* clearly puts:

The terrible famine in Ireland in 1846 came because the Protestants and the English knocked down the old stones. The wars of Europe were the terrible consequences of centuries of crimes against the old stones and the sacred groves of hazel and Oak. Still, the destruction of

the stone circles and groves did not stop; now the reckoning day was not far off twenty years or less. (255)

This is a belief of Aunt Bronwyn and her likes who believes on human affinity with nature. The beliefs –famine in Ireland and wars in Europe result in human cruelty over the stones and trees– are spiritual. These incidents have no direct link in which one affects the other. May be these ideas are illogical but not unreasonable as they help to extend human harmony with nature. People are still destroying the "stone circles" and "groves". It indicates the increasing exploitation of the natural resources by human beings. The Pre-Christian belief on the "reckoning day" is also not baseless because the end of earth is inevitable if overexploitation of nature continues.

This idea keeps close link to Native American Sand Lizards who believe "if people killed the snakes, the precious water disappeared" (38). Native American and Pre-Christian thought seem together regarding their connection to natural world. Their beliefs may seem to be unscientific for the modern world. However, they are not harmful but quite conducive to conserve the environment. Thus, this ethical relationship with the natural world helps to promote harmony between human and nature.

The novel begins and ends in the old gardens. A Sand Lizard family–Indigo, Sister Salt, their mother and grandmother live there. This Native American Family stays there in harmony with nature. Throughout the novel, in case of their separation the two sisters strive for reuniting with the old gardens. Thus, "old gardens" are at the centre of the novel as they occupy the minds of the characters as a source and essence of life.

Old gardens carry the concept of "land ethic" where all the life species make a community and share equal rights to live. The Sand Lizards live in tune with the

plants and animals. They treat with the creatures as if they were members of their own family. For instance, the following lines from the novel support the idea:

Sand Lizard warned her children to share: Don't be greedy. The first ripe fruit of each harvest belongs to the spirits of our beloved ancestors, who come to us as rain; the second ripe fruit should go to the birds and wild animals, in gratitude for their restraint in sparing the seeds and sprouts earlier in the season. Give the third ripe fruit to the bees, ants, mantises, and others who cared for the plants. A few choice pumpkins, squash and bean plants were simply left on the sand beneath the mother plants to shrivel dry and return to the earth. (17)

This view of "sharing" points out that "earth is the common home" which all the species, human or non-human, have equal right to share. Sand Lizard's culture of distributing the ripe fruits to the ancestors, the rain bringers, birds and wild animals, bees and ants, and the earth for their roles to grow the fruits develops the idea of harmonious balance. Human beings must understand that a plant grows with the help of rain, birds, bees and the soil etc. All the species play equal roles to establish a healthy ecosystem. This shows the "interconnectedness" of the things to each other. If even one is absent, it affects the whole system. Native American people understand it quite well. So Grandma Fleet tells Indigo and sister Salt in the novel:

"Old Ratty does all the work for you, so don't harm her!" Grandma Fleet showed them how to close up the rat's nest after they took what they wanted. Years before, when the refugees flocked to the old gardens hunger drove the people to eat the pack rats; but the hunger was far worse afterward because there were no pack rats left to gather and store seeds. (49)

This implies to the significance of an animal to the growth of plants in which non-human as well as human beings depend. Killing rats invited the desertification of the plants because there remained "nothing" to collect the seeds for the coming season. Grandma Fleet understands this and so she gives "space" to the rats in her world. It is an integration of the humans with the non-humans. The integration seems obvious when Indigo speaks to a snake in the spring as saying, "Remember us? We won't harm you, Snake, you knew our grandmother and our mother" (38). Here, the child talks to the snake. It shows her affinity with the animal world. She convinces that she will not harm it since it stands as her friend. The snake is her friend because it knows her grandmother and mother. This kind of identification of a snake with the human being indicates harmonious relationship between them.

Thus, "old gardens" symbolize human harmony with nature. Harmony lies in the interconnectedness of the things in the environment. It seems obvious in the title of the novel, *Gardens in the Dunes* itself. It means "the gardens in the spring water" or the "spring-fed gardens". This shows the relationship between the water and plants. The plants are there only because there is water. And the plants help to increase water in the spring. One cannot exist in the absence of others. And at the same time, the animals eat plants to survive, and the human beings depend upon the plants and animals in the gardens. This makes an environmental community where the entire life-species—human and non human—live together. Human beings do not harm the plants and animals but rather consider the latter as a part of their life. Thus, the old gardens put forth the idea of co-existence. The notion of co-existence is the very basis of harmonious relationship between human and nature.

The novel covers numerous examples that display cordial relationship between human and nature. One of them is human connection to the animal world. Silko

presents the animals not as secondary to the humans but she regards the animals as complementary to the human world. Humans and animals support each other and build a place where both of them live together. Indigo's love for a monkey, Linnaeus and a parrot, Rainbow serves as a striking example of harmony between human and animal world. She, in these lines, speaks to the monkey and shares her feelings with it as if the monkey were a human kind:

"Hello", she said softly as she approached the cage. "I know you want to get out." [. . .] out he came, chattering his gratitude. He wrapped his long curling tail around the bars of the cage to steady himself as they studied each other closely. He had shining golden eyes and he seemed to understand the language of the sand Lizard people when she spoke to him. "I am hungry. Is there anything to eat?" (105-6)

Indigo understands what the monkey feels and wants. So, she opens the cage to let the monkey come out. To free the monkey from the cage is to go against the animals' exploitation and establish animals' right to live their life in their own way. Indigo shares her feeling with the non-human creature as she tells him that she is hungry and so she wants to eat something. It shows that she is not different from animal. This enhances equality between human and non human world. Moreover, she feels that the monkey seems to understand her sand Lizard language. It indicates that an animal and a man or woman can communicate to each other. The communication helps to gain connection between two parties. Thus, the sense of communication between a girl and a monkey stands for the strong and cordial relationship between human and non-human animals.

Silko presents both the animals and humans at good terms. There is friendly relation between them and they help each other in need. Indigo does not leave the

parrot behind in her long journey to England and Italy, and carries both the monkey and the Parrot with her while looking for her lost sister. Though it is difficult to travel with the animals, she never takes them as burden and enjoys their presence. This kind of relationship helps to grow human respect towards non-human world. Indigo feeds well to both the creatures even in those days when she herself suffers from the lack of food. Silko highlights the cordial relationship between human and non-human animals and she posits:

Indigo woke up before the others and took rainbow and Linnaeus for a walk along the river; the sun had just come up and she thought the early start might get them more food. [. . .] Indigo found a stand of sunflowers gone to seed near the mouth of an arroyo; ordinarily she would have only taken some and left the rest for the next hungry being who came along, but she was afraid her parrot would suffer if she did not take all the seeds, so she filled the pocket of her seeds. (416)

Indigo has hard times to feed the monkey and parrot. But still her love for them does not grow less. She easily gets up early in the morning in search of food. The idea of leaving some seeds for the "next hungry being" at the time of crisis shows her respect and love for all the animals. Here she cannot leave any seed because she herself has some hungry animals to feed. However, at least she thinks of distributing food between the needy creatures. This thought is itself enough to enhance harmony between human and nature.

In the novel, not only the humans have supported the animals but also the animals help human beings in need. After the fire on the forest, Edward cuts contact with his people. He is badly injured and finds no hope to live. As his search party cannot find him, it is about to return. However, a monkey in the search party helps to

rescue him. The following extract helps to understand the role of a non-human element in human life:

Apparently, the monkey jumped around in the canoe and looked back toward the river bank to signal it has seen someone or something unusual. They turned back to investigate but at first they could not see him, but again the little monkey chattered and refused to return to the canoes. Finally, they came to catch him and found Edward lying unconscious. (147)

The monkey does the things which humans are unable to do. He gets the sense of a man lying unconscious. By "jumping" at first, then "looking back" and at last "chattering", it becomes successful to signal human beings that there is an injured man they are looking for. Thus, it is not wise to say that animal world is lower since they do not have language. Here, through its bodily language, the monkey succeeds to communicate with human beings and, at the same time, it saves a man's life. Here, we see very good relationship between man and animal. By showing such relationship, Silko inspires human affinity with non human world. This helps human beings to live together with non-human being and it extends harmony between human and nature.

The earth comprises diversity of life. Millions of species live in the environment. They all depend upon each other. So humans should feel the existence of these natural entities. They have to take care of the plants, and animals and other species around them. It makes a world where all the creatures can live in harmony. We see this kind of picture in the mind of Indigo. Silko explains vividly such a notion of coexistence among the species here:

The night Indigo dreamed she was back home at the old gardens; but where the sunflowers and corn plants and squash once grew, tall

gladiolus bloomed in all colors-red, purple, pink, yellow, orange, white, and black. A delightful fragrance and the hum of the bees filled the canon. Rainbow flew from flower to flower as if he were a hummingbird and Linnaeus sat beside her on the sand and picked tiny black seeds from a dried pod. She went to find Mama and Sister Salt at the spring but she found the big rattle snake instead. "Where's my corn pollen?" Snake asked and Indigo woke up. (306)

This presents a natural world where there are plants, animals and human beings. The plants such as "sunflowers", "corn" and the "squash" grow in the old gardens. The growth of plants in different colors reminds us of the diversity of plants in the environment. We see the presence of "bees", "parrot" and a "monkey" in the gardens. These creatures "hum", "fly" and "pick up" the seeds respectively. This shows their activities in the natural world. They all seem happy and satisfied in their own world. Indigo meets a snake who asks her about its corn pollen. Here the snake talks to Indigo. This talk between human and non human animal signifies that they share their feelings and thought. Thus, Silko gives a description of natural world in which humans live in harmony with plants and animals.

IV: Conclusion

Silko in *Gardens in the Dunes* develops the theme of human-nature harmony. Human-nature harmony is a condition in which both the human beings and nature are in good terms and human actions do not deteriorate earth to bring fatal consequences on organisms.

Human-nature relationship is the key issue the novel talks about. Silko portrays human beings' ill treatment over nature and its harmful impact upon the whole environment. And at the same time, she presents a world where human beings respect nature and take care of it. Such a human relationship with nature does not harm anything, rather it brings harmony. Thus, Silko, by analyzing both types of human relationships with nature, advocates human harmony with nature.

Silko believes that humans are part of natural world, and they are not separate from it. Since, human beings depend on nature for their needs and survival; they cannot disconnect themselves from the environment. This view leads to establish harmony between human and nature. It is true that human actions affect the environment and in the long run, it affects the human beings too. Thus human actions must not be harmful to the environment as they dismantle the harmony. Human-nature harmony has been presented through the Native American attachment with nature. Native American way of living is environment-friendly. The Sand Lizard family in the novel is in good tune with the nature around them. They consume the plants and animals on the basis of their needs only. They do not harm these non-human species but pay respect to the latter. It grows human affinity with them and helps to maintain harmonious relation.

On the other hand, Silko puts forth the European hostility to natural world. In the name of civilization and development, the merciless treatment over nature brings

fatal consequences. In the novel, construction work in the river destroys the earth's surface and changes the soil into "red as Flesh". It causes many plants to wither while the temperature increases and wells run dry. It hinders the ecosystem which results in environmental imbalance. Thus, Silko contrasts the solidity and balance of the natural world with the growing degradation and destruction that comes from human greed. While the Native American integration with nature brings balance and harmony, the European separation from it invites destruction and disharmony.

However, Silko juxtaposes Native American and Pre-Christian sensibility towards nature, and finds similarity between them. Both the traditions are close to nature and establish ethical relationship with it. Aunt Bronwyn, following the pre-Christian affinity with the natural world, observes the life in the old stones. She attempts to preserve the old stones and feels pity on their destruction. Moreover, her love for plants is also not less. She believes that plants have also souls and "if a garden is not loved, it could not properly grow" (242). Thus, by giving human attributes to the stones and plants, Silko cuts the Christian anthropocentrism and submits the view that the natural world is not inferior to the human beings. It resists human exploitation over natural world and promotes a healthy relationship between human and nature.

Silko rejects "anthropocentrism" and develops the ecocentric view to look at the natural world. Similarly, she dismantles nature/culture dualism and puts them not as two opposites but as similar ones. These ways help to bring human beings and nature together. This way of looking towards nature raises moral concerns about human interaction with nature. It results in human love and respect to the natural world.

Silko develops human-nature unanimity through Native American reciprocity to natural world. Native Americans have deep faith in nature. Their way of living and attitude towards nature reflect their harmonious relationship with nature. It rejects the nature/culture dualism and observes both the human and nature on the basis of equality. One of the Native American cultures, the "Ghost Dance" is based on the natural world. Their belief upon the regeneration after the performance of the Ghost Dance – where the earth becomes young again, and the plants green and the water clear – itself reflects the close link to nature. It changes the anthropocentric way of looking at nature and puts human and nature at good terms.

Native Americans have a deep connection to the natural world. It seems obvious through their relationship with the plants and animals. They behave the plants and animals as if the latter were human beings. Indigo talks to the snake and the monkey as she speaks to her sister and mother. She shares her feelings with these non human animals as she asks the monkey, "I am hungry. Is there anything to eat?" Such a relationship does not put humans in the centre and non-humans in the margin. It rather considers both the humans and non-human animals as equal parts of the environment.

Silko considers the environment as a community. All the plants and animals and other species along with human beings are the equal members of the natural community. It carries the concept of organic whole and assumes that human existence is not independent but interdependent. Thus, human beings should understand that all the things in the world—living or non living—have an "inherent worth" in them. In the novel, Grandma Fleet tells Indigo and Sister Salt not to harm the "Old Ratty" as it works for them. It means to say that people should not kill the rats as they collect the seeds for the plants to grow in the next season. Similarly, the Native Americans pay

respect to the birds and bees for their role to the growth of plants. This view leads to the interdependence of the entire thing in nature. Since all the species play equal roles to run the ecosystem, they deserve equal value and respect in their places. Thus, human beings should not take one thing in preference to the other and we need to leave "space" to all the natural entities.

In the novel, Silko submits the "old gardens" as a symbol of harmony between human and nature. The old gardens have the plants and animals, and springs and pools etc. The springs feed the plants, and the human and non-human animals survive on the plants. Furthermore, the humans pay proper respect to the plants and animals, and the whole natural world around them. Their culture and attitude do not harm nature. They do not separate them from the environment. Instead, they consider themselves as a part of it. They adopt the view that all living beings and non-living things are interconnected and they depend upon each other. Thus, the human understanding of "interconnectedness" of all the things leads to obtain human-nature harmony.

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