

## **Environmental Literature: An Introduction**

Literature and literary writings are the outcome of human culture where humans receive everything from the environment around. People get pleasure from literature because it has a power to imitate life. Literature therefore becomes a common ground of sharing the experiences of authors, character described, and the readers. Understanding the inner workings of the mind becomes the heart and soul of literary tradition. Feelings in literature become a mode for sharing ideas because literary authors themselves understand very well that the subject matter of literature is human experience that is grounded upon common natural motives and feelings.

In such literary tradition, environmental literature is an academic discipline intricately related to the world around us. It makes the natural world, with its living and non-living existence, a point of reference. The word "environment" has been derived in English from a French word, "enviormer", meaning "to circle" or "to surround" (Cunningham 4). In English, the same word is used as "environment" to define the social and cultural conditions that surround an individual or community.

As the term "environment" stands for both man-made and the natural world, environmental literature focuses upon the governance of the same law for man and nature in which both should be responsive to each other equally. It associates the text with terrains and all art forms, and language with landscape. It basically calls attention to those literary forms or artistic expressions which address landscape and environment. As every culture believes upon maintaining right relationship to nature, philosophers too possess a keen sense of place.

Such literary critical interests in the natural environment are not new, but, since twentieth century, environmental writings have started directly affecting the public awareness for the conservation of the wilderness because "to survive on earth,

human beings require the stable, continuing existence of a suitable environment" (Commoner 14). Our dependence on nature can be undoubtedly seen in the way we breathe the oxygen released from plants, live on foods produced from earth and take a shelter in houses built from resources acquired from the earth. But, along with men's civilization, the significance of natural environment has been decreasing.

Notwithstanding the overall dependence on earth, human beings have been explicitly violating the natural commandment of interdependence. Our surrounding is constantly changing with the growth of human population and increasingly disruptive activities. Due to this, major global changes we are facing mainly are the problems of ozone depletion, species extinctions, global warming and so on. Along with these environmental changes, the environmental beliefs and values of human cultures are also rapidly evolving.

For the understanding of environmental problems and its solutions, understanding culture can be an essential part. To understand this catastrophe, it has become necessary to closely understand the nature and its importance in human life. In this context, environmental literature aims to promote positive changes enabling communities to consider their impact on the environment and allowing people to make informed decisions on issues concerning their environment.

Nowadays, environmentalists have appeared in front to work for the protection of the environment. There are also different organizations working for the conservation of natural habitats. The rising problems like air and environmental deterioration are threats to the quality of life. As it has become a recent social problem, the earth philosophers are also trying to encourage us to emotionally experience our connectedness with the earth through their literary writings.

Similarly, literatures related to environment include the information of our way of treating our world, knowledge of social organization, politics and humanities because literary writers themselves believe that everything we receive is possible from the same environment as Schell has mentioned:

to look at particular hill or spring, to see it rightly, is to realize where it stands in relation to family, history and tribal myth; to look at an insect, rightly is to connect it with a folktale about the insects' contribution to tribal welfare. (17)

Such ecological awareness needs to go hand in hand with individual responsibility and social activities. For such literary imagination to become possible there must always be a proper role of human beings in a cosmic scheme. Like other conscious philosophers, Miller asserts; "the environmental crisis is an outward manifestation of a crisis of mind and spirit" (1). Therefore, to write about environment itself means to write about how men's mind sees nature. Human culture and environment complement each other and environmental literature can act as a means of introducing it. Environmental literature therefore proposes to awaken the readers to have harmonious relationship with nature. It also focuses upon the governance of same law for man and nature.

#### Historical Roots of Environmental Literature

Environmental writing has very deep historical roots. It has always become the purpose of literature to help us understand the world around properly. In every philosophical writings, there is always an influence of environment. In this sense, environmental literature emanates since the origin of literature. It was there either in the form of archetypal images or in the form of creation stories. The 'Garden of Eden' in the *Bible* is a perfect example of nature writing. It is often described in classical

poetries as a pleasure giving place. Likewise, creation stories, sometimes tell us about human's eternal relationship with nature as the English landscape was believed to be another form of earlier innocent Garden of Eden, if it was provided a proper care and nourishment when it had lost its purity.

Most of the Greco-Roman philosophies present the reflection of living god in all natural objects. Because of this attitude, they were called natural philosophers. They were the first to take first step in the direction of logical reasoning also. Since then, environment, as nature, is always believed to be in a constant state of transformation as a flower unfolds its leaves and petals. The world around us, is thus, thought to be an organism, a unity, within which, its potentialities constantly develop. Therefore, a communion between man and the physical ecosphere is essential. For this, Commoner states: "Any living thing that hopes to live in earth must fit into the ecosphere or perish" (11).

Many classical authors regarded earth as a living being. The earliest philosopher, Thales, considered all life forms as holy and said that all should live in harmony causing no harm to other life form (Gaarder 32). Similarly, Anaxagoras perceived natural world to be built up of an infinite number of minute particles that we could not perceive (Gaarder 38). Even in such smaller parts, there are fragments of all other beings. It means; we are all connected to all other beings. Even Plato had once complained in the fourth century B.C.:

Greece once was blessed with fertile soil and clothed with abundant forests of fine trees. After the trees were cut to build houses and ships, however, heavy rains washed the soil into the sea, leaving only a rocky skeleton of a body wasted by diseases. Springs and rivers dried up while farming became impossible. (qtd in Cunnighum 14)

Same case was about Theocritus and Virgil. They were aware of the negative consequences of the social and technological complexities of life in an urban setting. They had adopted pastoral settings to bring forth their writings concerned with the world around.

The main sources of such philosophical understandings about environment have been always determined by different cultures and religions of different societies. Most of the eastern cultures believe upon maintenance of right relationship with the earth. However, Christianity, as the religion of the west, has internalized the hierarchical understanding of the earthly creatures since its origin. It has ignored the biocentric value of ecosphere as it sets humans against nature only to prove the belief of human superiority over nature.

The religious book of Christianity, *The Bible* itself follows the same belief and presents human beings as a special creation of God. Man is supposed to be living according to the wish of God by ruling over all other beings in the world. According to this belief, man's role is to exploit nature. This belief of considering men's superiority has been causing disaster in a nature around because *The Bible* itself suggests humans to have dominion over all other creatures: "Let us make in our image, according to our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth" (Gen 1:26).

Lynn White Jr., an American historian, therefore, blames Christianity for giving overpowering position to men to rule over nature and creatures. He argues: "We are superior to nature, contemptuous of it, willing to use it for our slightest whim. We shall have worsening ecological crisis until we reject Christian axiom that nature has no reason but to serve man" (146). It is the god, the creator who gives over all power to humans so that they could rule and dominate other elements of the earth.

This anthropocentric conception has still strongly taken hold over the Christian culture which regards nature only for utilitarian purposes. It is because of this, the Euro-American cultures give less importance to nonhuman objects. They never value the land in comparison to themselves. When the objects become useless because of their exploitation, they consider them to be valueless. Nature is therefore adopted as an object to be used and possessed by human beings.

On the other hand, in Eastern culture, Hindus have a deep respect for nature. They worship nature as a necessary part of human life. In its creation myths, five great elements, "panchatatwo", "-- sky, air, fire, water, and earth--are believed to be emerged out of "prakriti", the earth (Rao 26). These elements are the essence of every creating force. Hence, the essence of every creating force is latent in five elements of prakriti; nothing can be alien and hostile rather they are inseparable ones.

Hindu philosophy is directly nurtured by *The Vedic* culture which relies on man's memory of his life on earth. It shares a belief that man and nature both are equally responsible for the better or the worse as they are inseparably linked with each other and God is also not thought to be different from nature because it is just an uttering of a word which is the by-product of a language that comes from nature. Even the gods like Agni, Varun, and Vayu pray nature before performing their acts. In this context, Nelson shares his belief that, "[. . .] the Vedic polytheism envisions a multiplicity of deities inhabiting and informing the worlds of nature, with whom humans are enjoined to form mutually beneficial relationship" (143). These gods speak about prithvi/ earth as an essential part of humans. She is presented as the foundation, the basis out of which emerges all that exists:

Just as horse scatters dust, so earth

When she came into being, scattered the peoples

Earth, gracious leader and protectors of the world,

Who holds in form grasp both trees and plants. (AV xi)

Here, earth or nature becomes a sacred place where all are given proper place so that they can live in harmony with each other. In *The Vedic Experience: Mantra Manjari*, Raimundo Panikkar also considers; "The earth is the basis of life and when considered as a divine being, she always occupies a special place among the Gods" (120). As other parts of Hinduism emphasize on a harmonious relationship between human and nature, the *Vedic* culture also advises us to preserve nature and live in harmony with it. Most of the philosophical systems are believed to be developed from mediation on such *Vedic* mantras.

*The Bhagwat Gita*, another important aspect of Hindu religion, also inhabits the value of all living beings. It regards earth as mother and all other creations, its essential parts. While translating *The Bhagvad Gita*, A.C. Prabhupada has said: "Nature is said to be the cause of all material activities and efforts, whereas the living entity is the cause of the various sufferings and enjoyments in this world" (645). It occupies the same value as *The Veda* in the context of nature. In *The Bhagvad Gita*, Brahma is supposed to be the creator of the whole universe:

By me, by my manifested form

the whole world is pervaded.

All beings subsist in me [. . .]

Myself is the source and support

of all beings. (ix)

It is because the source of all life is same, the mother earth, no life form gets either superior or inferior place in the same earth. The devout lifestyle presented in *The Bhagvad Gita* also becomes a source of environmental sensitivity as yogies are

described as busy people doing good for others. Sadhusangananda dasa also sees its ideal to be "devoid of any thing of greed, desire to control, manipulate or exploit" (72). *The Bhagvad Gita* fosters such Karma Yoga for all individuals to reestablish the real purpose of life. It holds the belief that, "all actions are performed by the modes of Prakriti" (Telang 3.27). It recognizes the earth as the sustainer and saver of her children.

Hindus worship all life forms like cows, dogs, crows, and oxen during different festivals, and also feed animals like dogs, ants and monkeys. They even worship plants like bar, peepal as a sacred one. They expect a good fortune from their admiration of all life forms in nature. Recognize such intrinsic value in the natural world and in non-human species, they share an ecologically friendly attitude.

From such activities, Hinduism encourages man for the environmental conservation by protecting it from evil forces.

In the same manner, another Eastern religion, Buddhism, says; "Do not serve mean ends. Do not live in heedlessness. Do not be a world-upholder" (Ikeda 152). Buddhist thinkers are also very common to Hinduism while concerning about nature. This religion acquires the message of love for all the creatures. Buddha has said:

Whatever living beings are there, feeble or strong, all either long or great, middle-sized, short, small or large. Either seen or which are not seen, and which live far (or) near, either born or seeking birth, may all creatures be happy-minded. (Miller 8: 3-6)

This religion has a deep concern for all life forms and their happiness in the universe. Like Yogies in Hinduism, Buddha had a belief that to be an 'Ariya' the man has to have pity on all living creatures. Therefore, Buddha himself taught his disciples to love and respect each creature equally.



In *Buddhism: The Living Philosophy*, Ikeda mentions: "Ever since the time of Shakyamuni, nearly three thousand years ago, Buddhism has explained the nature of life from the standpoint that life itself is latent in nature, the universe, and all things" (23-24). In this way, all things are believed to have their assimilation with every other thing in this religion and man also cannot be apart from this environment.

In Buddhism, "Soho" is subject and "Eho" is object (Ikeda 144). Both are two aspects of one thing. The eho, an environment, contains the conditions which bring life into individualized expression in the form of soho. Buddhists therefore make no distinction between animate and inanimate objects. As animals, plants, and humans employ the theoretically lifeless elements of sun, air, water, and minerals to produce energy for their sustenance, all share the reciprocal relationship among themselves.

According to Buddhist culture, only man is fortunate to achieve enlightenment but, it does not mean that other natural entities acquire less importance. Different birds and animals like monkeys, parrots, trees, and oxen are worshipped believing them to be the reincarnation of Buddha. It suggests humanity not to forget the fact that consciousness of man is highly developed than that of any other living creatures. Therefore, human beings should reflect not only on themselves but, also on the world.

Similar to Hinduism and Buddhism, Native American religion is pantheistic one. It regards all objects in nature as sacred. All the life forms, therefore, have equal status to Native Americans. As every culture has its origin myths, Native Americans share the myths which give overall importance to nature. Thought Woman, Corn Mother, and Sun Father are three most important figures in Native American mythology. All three beings are extremely powerful because they are interdependent. They share a belief that the universe consists of our world, the earth, and also the four worlds below, where the spirits of the dead go.

From Native American origin story, we come to know that one holds many things together in a single thought. In Laguna Pueblo belief, whole world is created out of the imagination of Tse'itsi'nako, Thought Woman. As the whole world emerges from a single thought, all are equally important. Like Thought Woman, Hard Beings Woman is presented as a mother creature in the following Hopi creation story:

On this island, Hard Beings Woman is identified with or, as they say, "owns" all hard substances--moon, stars, beads, coral, shell, and so forth. She is a sea goddess as well, the single inhabitant of the earth that island that floats alone in the waters of space. From this meeting of woman and water, earth and her creatures were born. (Allen 14)

These creation stories importantly speak of Native Americans' eternal relationship with the nature around. The earth, humans, and all other life forms acquire equal value in their culture. In *American Indian Myths and Legends*, Richard Erdoes and Alfonso Ortiz have elucidated:

Mysterious but real power dwells in nature, in mountains, rivers, rocks, even in pebbles. White people may consider them inanimate objects, but to the Indians, they are enmeshed in the web of the universe, pulsating with life and potent with medicine. (5)

Native Americans feel nature as an animate being. Our survival depends upon mysterious power of the same nature which regards reciprocity in all creatures. Therefore, for them, nature is the only source of creativity, knowledge and aestheticism. Due to this conception, Native Americans worship nature for her kindness even now. Paula Gunn Allen believes; the fundamental idea that permeates their life itself is: "We are the land, and the land is mother to us all" (127).

These ideas and experiences concerned with different cultures and religions have been always represented in literature since the start of literary tradition. In part of environmental literature, rural settings are always considered to be one of the most influential modes of expression for environmental awareness because such settings could easily represent the life of the rustic people, very far from artificiality of the city life. Wilderness in literary writings does not only mean wild areas but it is a concept that refers to wholeness. As a result, pastoral settings direct us towards the realm of physical nature and we expect harmonious life in this environmental wholeness.

While eastern philosophies are directly influenced from Hinduism and Buddhism, their attitude toward nature is totally biocentric. These philosophies have become the source of their culture and the effects are seen in eastern literatures also. The greatest poet of Nepal, Laxmi Prasad Devkota, worships the earth and its beauty through his writings. He always wished to bring happiness into the lives of the poor rustic dwellers. Even if his rustic characters are innocent, they can respond nature's truth. The main protagonist of his famous epic, *Shakuntala*, grows up in the lap of nature and she even shares her pain at adulthood with nature only, even when she is rejected by her husband. Devkota, in *Shakuntala*, is able to do justice to his characters by comparing Shakuntala's pain, pleasure, and innocence with nature:

She is a drop of sweetest honeydew [. . .]

She is an Apsara, a flower- maid

As lovely as the moon, a paragon

Who shines as bright as usha on the snow.

Her eyes are lakes at twilight love- illumed;

Her body is a sculpture cast in gold

Wherein, as in a temple, incense burns

Exhaling perfume, and it spreads a light  
 For hermit hearts in sacred caves confined  
 That conjures rainbows to their imagings. (5: 61-62)

Devkota had a belief that the progressive world is possible only with return to nature and sharing the globe equally. Like this, in all eastern philosophical writings, there is a concern for all life forms is there. They teach human beings a sense of responsibility to natural world as wilderness was very common to the people of the earlier times because of their love for the universe.

During Renaissance, the writers meditated on how nature should be treated. It was a positive attitude toward nature as Mckusick mentions, "Francis Bacon had called upon scientists to investigate nature rather than books, and his appeal eventually bore fruit [ . . .]" (21). At this time, literature widely mystified nature using it symbolically. *The Tempest*, written by Shakespeare, idealizes the landscape and this idealized nature is given extreme supremacy in form of Prosperos' wisdom to create all powerful Ariel.

Later on, Romanticists connected humans with non-human natural world and brought forth awareness that, "Environmental crisis involves a crisis of the imagination which depends on finding better way of imaging nature and humanity's relation to it" (Buell 2). As a result, the main theme of this movement was the wilderness of nature, supernatural elements, imagination, and most importantly, self-expression. It was a reaction against materiality caused by industrial capitalism and French revolution; it had resulted into spiritual alienation of the people from the land and from each other. People and nature were reduced to utilitarian purpose.

These philosophers of Romantic period had a strong belief upon their aesthetic skills. The writers, most importantly, poets of this period, attempted to find the law

about nature and people as the critics like Rueckert see, "[. . .] the function of poetry [. . .] is to nourish the spirit, of man by giving him the cosmos to suckle" (105). They had an organic view of nature. They respected nature and opposed the civilized exploitation. They really liked to see nature as living. Human's role was considered to be acting only as a part of nature. In this way, they seem quite close to the modern deep-ecologists who have come to a conclusion that humans and nature are one.

Among these poets, William Blake was the one to try to prefigure the consequences of total destruction of all the animate and inanimate objects from such concept of utility in most of his writings. He always felt his moral relationship with nature in which modern inventions are the villains of the environment. He has aroused laughter upon Erasmus Darwin's excitement with the invention of world's most powerful steam engine and he personified it in his poem as a "giant- birth" which "wields his large limbs, and nodding shakes the Earth" (Mckusick 97).

Blake totally goes against such conception and writes that "[. . .] the small dull round even of a universe would soon become a mill with complicated wheels" (qtd in Mckusick 100). It does not mean that he was against inventions but he could see the differences between the cruel work of industries and beneficial human skills. The only fear he had from it was the fear of dehumanization.

S. T. Coleridge also shared a common perception of the natural world as a dynamic ecosystem and a passionate commitment to the preservation of wild creatures and scenic areas (Mucksick 36). In his famous poem *The Rhyme of the ancient Mariner*, there is a painful scene caused by the misbehavior of a man with another life form --a bird. A man returns as a changed, mature one from his voyage of exploration. The Mariner realizes the value of everything only when he totally assimilates himself with the landscape and says; "Farewell, farewell! But this I tell/

To thee, thou Wedding Guest!/ He prayeth Well, Who loveth Well/ Both man and bird and beast" (Line 610). It suggests awareness for the inherent unity to be necessary between man and other creatures. It is a strong meditation upon the green world of nature.

Similarly, another prominent poet of the time, William Wordsworth had a belief that the lakes have awakened and nurtured his imagination. Since his childhood memory is a product of nature, his writings are also the product of the same memory. To a great extent, his writings emerge from a desperate sense of alienation from the natural world. He achieved the world of reality through awareness of suffering, agony that most of the people faced after French Revolution and after that from Industrial revolution.

Rustic people and their surroundings are very common to Wordsworth's writings. He believed them to be taught by nature to endure hardships caused by chaotic urban life. His characters enjoy living in the hills, having simple, independent life. His poetry's subjects are joy, primacy of human emotion and necessarily, the obedience of the moral law of nature.

As a result, his poems have the life giving potentials as well as the theme of human- nature relationship. His poems have a theme of communion with nature. His poem, *Tintern Abbey*, poses several important questions about the right relationship between humankind and the natural world. There are the exploration of the objects that he had seen five year's ago and now and their effects on him. He could never forget the place where he had lived: "In nature and the language of the sense/ The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,/ The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul/ of all my moral being" (Lines 108-11) as it is a beautiful presentation of growth of the poet's mind from childhood to maturation and then old age.

Many of the times, Wordsworth personifies natural objects to give their proper meanings. His poems share a common theme that humans can not gain happiness when they are separated from nature. He provides his intimate relationship with nature in his poem *The Prelude* and expresses his childhood experiences in these words:

fair seedtime had my soul, and I grew up  
 fostered alike by beauty and by fear  
 Much favored in my birthplace, and no less  
 in that beloved Vale to which ever long  
 we were transplanted [. . .] (169)

Jonathan Bate reveals Wordsworth's approach as "holistic: he moved from nature to the natives, exploring the relationship between land and inhabitant" (45) and also considers him to be going before the environmentalists to understand its values. So, Romanticism is an important movement to establish eco-centric values in English literatures focusing upon the view of oneness among all living and non-living things.

There were also the opposite thinkers of nature but the American Romantics like Muir, Thoreau, and Emerson's writings only reflected their love of wilderness and sympathetic attitude towards nature. They are totally influenced from European Romanticists. It is also believed that pastoral ideology is the main source of American cultural self-understanding as the revelation of rustic dwellers were the main sources of understanding culture of Europe during Romanticism. The first writings about America were works of geographical description. They celebrated, explored, and mapped the land. American Romanticism itself was a re-naisance of American literature. Therefore, it wanted its intellectuals to imagine the heart of America as rural. Buell claims that this movement independently "stressed the

historical importance of pastoral, frontier and wilderness themes" and also idealized the Native American as the "noble savage" (15).

In this sense, anti-urbanism can be taken as a prime feature of American Romanticism. The writers of this period showed the direct connection between individual and nature and shared the belief that when humans have whole awareness of the beauty and truth of natural surroundings, our knowledge is fulfilled. At first, this movement in literature appeared as the old world desire of writing about nature. It became an image of American nationalism. It developed a unique American voice of cultural identity connected to nature during the nineteenth century.

Later on, this American version of romanticism came to be known as Transcendentalism with the establishment of Transcendental club. The members of this club celebrated the power of an individual imagination to commune with the universe. They wanted to transcend themselves from limitations of the material world. They were widely inspired by nature. They considered God to be originated from human experience. Similar to Romanticism, transcendentalists' philosophy celebrates nature and individual equally. Most common theme between these two lines of thought is self-examination, celebration of individualism, and extolling of the beauties of nature and humankind.

The leading figure of Transcendentalism movement was Ralph Waldo Emerson, torn by doubts and dissatisfactions with orthodox Christian piety. He had a power to enthrall his audiences with his thoughtful, provocative lectures on travel tours. One of his widely known lectures, *Nature*, speaks about his experience of the natural world as he has written: "In this wilderness, I find something more dear and connate than in streets or villages" (148). This book is grounded in an ecological understanding of the relationship between humankind and the natural world. Emerson



takes nature here as "essences unchanged by man, space, the air, the river, the leaf" (146). Therefore, what he expects is; harmonious existence of every living and non-living beings in the natural world. He always enjoys an original relation to the universe and immortalizes it. In Mckusick's view also, Emerson finds the aim of every science is to "find a theory of nature" (146).

In this period, Thoreau's romantic approach to nature was also fundamentally ecological (Worster 58). His description of Walden Pond in *Walden* deals greatly to a Romantic conception of nature. Thoreau had once said that, "wilderness is the preservation of the world" (Peeper 197). He always valued isolation from social attachments and liked to go near nature to observe its artistry. Like other natural philosophers, he rejected materialism:

I respect not his labors, his farm where everything has its price, who would carry the landscape, who would carry his good to market, if he could get anything for him [. . .] on whose farm nothing grows free [. . .] on whose fruits are not ripe for him till they are to dollars. Give me the poverty that enjoys true wealth. (145)

The interesting thing Worster finds in Thoreau's nature description is; "he always stressed interdependence in community of plants, animals and humans [. . .] Rather than hunting squirrels, he asserted, we should honor them for the part they played in the economy of the universe" (70). Thoreau always affirms man's kinship with soil. He gets a strong sense of identity between human and nature. Most of the times, he personifies nature to show nature's conservation and for harmonious relationship with the entire creature. He envisions the destruction of nature caused by modernity.

Later on, John Muir, a popular natural historian, started working for the ecological balance. He wanted to preserve wildlife and wilderness for its own sake,

regardless of its usefulness to us. Therefore, he became the first person to establish the National Park system. Because of his efforts, he succeeded in establishing the larger principle of American wilderness. As a passionate lover of nature, Muir believed upon the intrinsic value of all living mortals. Most of his writings are based on his pastoral wanderings. Mckusick confirms that, like other environmental writers, "Muir contrasts the destructive industrial technologies of the white man with the more sustainable subsistence practices of the indigenous Indians [ . . .]" (175).

Muir also believed that close contact with nature is possible only when we are away from urban materialism. Among his many famous writings, *My first Summer in the Sierra* evokes the mystery and wonder of the California wilderness. In this book, he expresses his belief that all living creatures should be given equal right as we humans have. This book helped to form the modern environmental movement that is aware of ecological instability.

In part of Native American literature, their oral literatures worldwide contain valuable insights relating to nature. In these oral literatures, human survival depends upon mysterious power of nature which regards reciprocity in all creatures. These oral literatures are given proper place in written form by many writers. Among them, L. M. Silko, N. Scott Momaday, Allen Paula Gunn, and Simon Ortiz are some contemporary writers oriented toward retaining the value of nature with the help of their tradition. In their writings, they relate themselves with the land and landscape.

In her often anthologized essay "Landscape, History, and Pueblo Imagination", Silko writes of the deep connection between Pueblo Indian people and the land, and about how daily experience, the spoken record of Pueblo history, and the people themselves are inextricably tied to the landscape. As everything in this

universe shares the reciprocal relationship, Silko observes this reciprocity in Pueblo ritual:

Nothing is wasted. What cannot be eaten by people or in some way used must then be left where other living creatures may benefit. What domestic animals or wild scavengers can't eat will be fed to the plants. The plants feed on the dust of these few remains. (264)

Like environmentalists, Native Americans never like to waste the natural material as garbage even then when they are rotten. Not only the living ones, but also the remains of every dead beings are given proper respect by ancient Pueblo people. Silko mentions it by writing; "The remains of things-animals and plants, the clay and the stones-were treated with respect. Because for the ancient people, all things had spirit and being" (265). They did not even consider animal and human bones and rinds useless. Therefore, they buried the dead in vacant rooms of their homes. They believed, if they do so, the spirits remain close to them. When dead bodies merge with dust, they are again joined with the mother earth who is the creator of all things. This idea of interrelatedness inextricably attaches them to rocks and clay, which are also parts of the same mother earth. They believed, even if they die, they assimilate themselves within the same womb, the womb of the earth. Life never ends because even after death it has to return everything to nature whatever it had achieved from her. Supporting her worldly conceptions, a famous eco-critic, Lawrence Buell expects Silko to imagine a less technological, less artificial life that extends across lines of gender and ethnicity in her writing in near future (18). It is the excess avoidance of environment which is gradually alienating us from nature. Therefore, the common thing, each and every literary writings share is; the earth should be regarded as a dwelling place for an interdependent community of living things.

### **Ecocriticism: An Introduction**

Ecocriticism has recently emerged in literature and cultural studies to focus on literary expression of human experience in a naturally and culturally shaped world. Including all perspectives within its critical framework, it examines how the concepts of the natural are constructed in different cultures and expressed through varieties of literary practices. It is a literary and cultural effort which contributes to the construction of interdisciplinary bridges between criticisms and other disciplines through written text, media, history, anthropology, philosophy, painting and so on. It also embraces previously neglected theories and methods in environmental literary scholarship.

The famous eco-critic Cheryll Glotfelty defines ecocriticism as "the study of relationship between literature and the physical environment, taking an earth centered approach to literary studies" (xviii). It comes forward to analyze the roles that the natural environment plays in the imagination of a cultural community in any texts. In a sense, ecocriticism investigates how nature is used literally or metaphorically in certain literary or aesthetic genres and tropes.

This analysis allows ecocritic to access how the concepts of nature and the natural are constructed in different cultures and expressed in a variety of their practices. It has developed interest in nature writing, pastoral settings, and literary ecology. It claims the rural environment and wild nature as its area of study. It is of no doubt that different cultural critic's reject the ecocriticism's focus on different literary genres, but an unavoidable reality is that ecocritical movement has been now considered an important genre of literary writing.

The word "eco" itself implies the interdependent communities, integrated systems, and strong connections among constituent parts. Ecocritics are always aware

of this interdependence between human beings and the land. They study relationships between human culture and the physical world. Howarth asserts it as:

Ecocriticism is a name that implies more ecological literacy than its advocates now possess [. . .] *Eco* and *Critic* both derive from Greek, *Oikos* and *Kritis*, in tandem they mean "house judge" [. . .] *ecocritic* is "a person who judges the merits and faults of writings that depict the effects of culture upon nature, with a view toward celebrating nature, berating its despoilers, and reversing their harm through political action. (69)

Whatever people think of the land appears in a way they treat their surroundings. But, in reality, we are only a part of this whole universe. Ecocritics try to reveal such participation by reflecting our living in more than a human world and all texts have an influence of this world in any sense because all texts are literally or imaginatively situated in a place.

Therefore, the task of ecocritic is to reexamine cultural attitudes toward nature through its history. For this task to become possible, plays, films, poems, scientific treatises, stories, journals, essays, novels of the past become necessary parts. While going through these means, ecocriticism avoids the earlier egocentric western concept in which man was considered little lower than the angels and all above the rest of earthly creations. In this sense, man was the almighty of all others.

But, a newly emerging ecocritic paradigm has a deep respect for the integrity of all other forms of life with which humankind shares the earth. Therefore, ecocriticism greatly emphasizes on the biological processes and relations that precede and contribute to the socio-cultural production of space. If we appreciate this process, it can help restore harmonious balance between nature and human cultures.

As literature, culture, and language are produced from physical environment, nature gets its importance for what it conceptually means. As a result nature in literature is important not for what it physically is, but for what it conceptually means. In this sense, Kern cites:

ecocriticism ultimately a form of environmental advocacy, is primarily a critical and literary tool, a kind of reading designed to expose and facilitate analysis of a text's orientation both to the world it imagines and to the world in which it takes shape, along with the conditions and contexts that affect that orientation, whatever it might be. (Kern 260)

The classic writers were also unwittingly doing ecocriticism for centuries even when the genre had not been introduced onto the academic scene. Religious activities and creation myths were the sources of eco awareness. Later on, sharing the idea of organic whole, American transcendentalists and British Romanticists gave it consistency. These acts contributed a lot for the emergence of ecocriticism which took place as a literary criticism only since 1990.

These days, ecocritics are rediscovering early writers rereading the classics from green perspectives and beginning to frame their subject in a theoretical way. Nowadays, ecocriticism, not only analyzes the ways in which literature represents the human relation to nature at particular moment of history and clearly mentions our environmental concern as global, but it is also a step towards eco-awareness for knowledge of the world. Riordan also shares his belief:

Ecocriticism preaches the virtues of reverence, humility, responsibility, and care; it argues for low impact technology (but is not

antitechnological); it decries bigness and impersonality in all forms (but especially in the city); and demands a code of behavior that seeks permanence and stability based upon ecological principles of diversity and homeostasis. (1)

It therefore aims at the transformation of human environmental and ecological consciousness. At this process, understanding of our ecology helps us to value other creatures of the earth. Even challenging the recent theories like Feminism, Marxism, Linguistics, and Cultural theories, ecocriticism wishes to record the earlier texts with ecological awareness

Relating to Barry Commoner's first law of ecology; "Everything is connected to everything else" (34), ecocriticism connects man to man and man with the entire cosmos. It is not only related to nature conservation, writing, and literature, it also conducts on interconnectedness and integrity of all things. Michael P. Branch et al. also explain it as:

not just a means of analyzing nature in literature; it implies a move toward a more biocentric worldview, an extension of ethics, a broadening of human's conception of global community to include non-human life forms and the physical environment. (xiii)

In this context, major ecocritics, Glotfelty and Fromm also share the same belief and opine the fact that, "Despite the broad scope of inquiry and disparate levels of sophistication, all ecological criticism shares the fundamental premise that human culture is connected to the physical world, affecting it and affected by it" (xix).

Therefore, the ecocritics try to remedy the sense of place that is ignored and slighted in a human world.

## Foundation of Ecocriticism

Still an emerging movement, ecocriticism as a term was first coined in 1978 by William Ruckert in his essay, "Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism" considering the application of ecology and ecological concepts to the study of literature. The notion of ecocriticism had already begun in USA in the late 1980s and in the UK as "green studies" in the early 1990s. Since late 1970s, environmental movement in literature was trying to establish into an identifiable group. Though it had little impact upon its readers, it couldn't organize its group because each critic was individually trying to invent their environmental approach.

As a literary genre, it came into view since the mid-eighties when a collective struggle of the scholars published a course description concerned with environmental literature. In 1992, ASLE (Association for the Literature of Environment) was formed along with the mission: "to promote the exchange of ideas and information pertaining to literature considers the relationship between human beings and the natural world" (Glotfelty and Fromm xviii).

ASLE was established at a special session of Western Literature Association (WLA) in Reno, Nevada along with its purpose of sharing the facts and ideas and texts concerned with the study of literature and environment. In the discourse of ASLE, the terms "green" and "ecocritical" are synonymous. ASLE has now expanded its groups in different countries like Germany, Japan, UK, and Korea. It examines literature through an ecocritical lens. Since 1993, ASLE has started publishing its house journal, ISLE, (*Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*) which not only focuses on American Transcendentalism and British Romanticism, but like other environmental journals, it also focuses on other cultures and their literatures equally as nature in Latin American poetry, environmental fiction in the Caribbean,



essays and rituals of Japan, Africa and many other cultures. It also provides a forum for the critical studies of the literary and performing arts addressing environmental consideration in which, most current scholarship in the rapidly evolving field of ecocriticism can often be found.

Although, the term 'ecocriticism' was coined twenty years ago, critical readings of literary texts and movements in relation to ideas of nature, wilderness, natural science, and spatial environments of all sorts have been rewarded for the better part of a century only since the last decade when, the study of literature in relation to environment begun as a major critical movement. The environment itself has been rediscovered by the people who live in it only since 1970 April as this day was celebrated as "Earth Week" in history. In this day, different queries on environment were discussed in deeper level:

Why, after millions of years of harmonious co-existence, have the relationships between living things and their earthly surroundings begun to collapse? Where did the fabric of the ecosphere begin to unravel? How far will the process go? How can we stop it and restore the broken links? (Commoner 9)

All these questions were directed toward environmental crisis caused by human action as men were felt to be losing all their freedom running behind technological dependence. It appeared as a movement for the literary critics also who started examining our own attitudes toward nature through criticism of written texts and tried to create it as a new form of knowledge in terms of nature which has been introduced as 'ecocriticism' by Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm in a deeper level in their text, *The Ecocriticism Reader*.

Ecocriticism's positive effects are seen not only in the attitudes of people towards nature but it can be observed in the use of language also. The same land once referred as a bog is now called wetlands. Likewise, the areas once called jungle is now called a rainforest. This process of shifting word choice considers the ignored places to be essential components of the ecosystem. Such conceptual shifts reflected in language indicate that the changes are not simply a few isolated attitudes but involve a more fundamental cultural change.

Ecocriticism was heralded by the publication of two seminal works, both published in 1996: *The Ecocriticism Reader*, edited by Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm, and *The Environmental Imagination*, by Lawrence Buell. "The Ecocriticism Reader" stands as a major step toward organizing the field of ecocriticism independently because before this, ecocritical voices appeared under different headings as Glotfelty mentions:

as American studies, regionalism, pastoralism, the frontier, human ecology, science and literature, nature in literature, landscape in literature [. . .] each was a single voice howling in the wilderness.

(xvii)

After the publication of Glotfelty's *The Ecocriticism Reader*, Lawrence Buell defined the same term 'ecocriticism' as "[. . .] a study of the relationship between literature and the environment conducted in a spirit of commitment to environmentalist praxis" (430).

Nowadays, nature has been studied through ecocritical eye which not only crosses ethnic and cultural boundaries, but expands awareness and encourages understandings of a diversity of practices that could become a mutual beneficial form of knowledge with practical application. It is a critical focus on nature which brings

significant rewards to students and the culture at large. It also engenders fertile cross disciplinary and cross-cultural analysis.

#### Fundamental Projects of Ecocriticism

Generally, ecocriticism shares interdisciplinary nature inviting all perspectives into its ideology. But, understanding the relationship between land and literature as a whole is the main crux of ecocriticism. The most important thing in ecocriticism is that it searches for biological process and relation which contributes for the socio-cultural production of space. In this literary tradition, every branch of knowledge is believed to be resulted from eco-centric implication. It gives overall attention to the representation of nature in literature. For this project to become possible, ecocritics rest on four fundamental theories.

First of all, earth stands as a point of reference for the understanding of everything in ecocritical projects. It analyzes environmental literature with earth-centered approach. It sees every branch of criticism sharing the ecospheric conceptions. As earth is the source of every living and non-living beings, all knowledge follows the same earth. No knowledge gains fulfillment until we have the proper understanding of the earth. Earth becomes essential to understand our ethics and religion, art and literature, culture and politics, philosophy and physics and other disciplines as well. It is because, all epistemological understandings are related with human culture and in return, human culture is directly or indirectly associated with nature. Therefore, for the negotiation of human and non-human world, ecocriticism "puts one foot on literature and the other on land" (Glotfelty xix).

Since the earth becomes the source of all knowledge, we must try to understand particular things relation to other things because, "everything in the earth is connected to everything else". This reciprocal relationship between all creatures

can be seen in a way living creatures attain oxygen released from plants, foods produced from vegetables and animals, and houses built from plants. In the process of living, every existing thing on earth is intricately connected. When we are able to study everything as an organic whole, our study gets permanence in ecocriticism.

Referring to such holistic conceptions, Paula Gunn Allen highlights upon the American Indian thought and mentions:

The natural state of existence is whole. Thus healing chants and ceremonies emphasize restoration of wholeness, for disease is a condition of division and separation from the harmony of the whole.

Beauty is wholeness. Goddess is wholeness. (247)

According to Allen, the concept of Circle or the Sacred Hoop is very significant in American Indian culture for the significance of such holistic concepts. The earth can be known when it is seen in a single life--the living and non-living constituents of the ecosphere.

While studying the interconnectedness among all parts of nature, languages and landscape, texts and terrain, woods and world also get permanence of interconnection among themselves in ecocriticism. It therefore assumes language to be evolved out of the evolutionary process of the earth. William Rueckert in "Language and Ecology" equates poetry with green plants; "Green plants, for example, are among the most creative organism on earth. They are nature poets [. . .] Poems are green plants among us" (11). Poems, in this way, are models for energy flow, community building, and ecosystems. In them, we are able to utter a language only when we experience something around us. Therefore, language is an expression of the world in a way we experience it. It evolves in the world as other creatures evolve. Ecocritics see no value of language if it is put apart from earth. For them,

language is the earth and earth is the language. Such unity signifies the unity in everything that exists.

Similarly, as earth shares unity among all creatures, ecocriticism not only discusses about earth rather it wishes to know her in a whole. It shares the view of natural wholeness and gives wholeness to the earth. This wholeness becomes the motivating force of ecocriticism. Until we do not get earth in totality, our knowledge is incomplete. If we follow the ecocritical lens, everything gets proper place in the same ecosphere. As the whole is always greater than the part, every existing element as a part of nature, can never gain victory over her. Hence, it surpasses our understanding. In this regard, Christopher Manes writes; "ecological knowledge means metaphorically the language of birds--the passions, pains, and cryptic intents of the other biological communities that surround us and silently interpenetrate our existence" (25). Thus, ecological knowledge is eco-consciousness.

For the adjustment of all creatures, ecological literatures desire to establish a culture which could respect the non-human world. At this time when, environmental exploitation from men is increasing day by day, ecocriticism puts forward the literary writings which suggest men's responsibility towards the environment, surrounding them. It expects men to be aware of their responsibilities sharing the harmonious relationship among all living and non-living entities. It also warns human beings for the damages done to nature. On top of it, ecocriticism advocates against anthropocentric perspectives.

#### Anthropocentrism and Biocentrism in relation to Ecocriticism

Anthropocentric perspective is entirely human centered approach to look at nature. It views humans at the top of all other creatures and accords no intrinsic value to either non-human animate or inanimate objects. Since the concept of value itself is

a human creation, anthropocentrism sees humans as the source of all values and views the world placing humans at the center of all creation. Thus, anthropologists' focus is on humans where the natural world is ignored or put backward or sees from the perspective of how it can help human beings.

As Christian religion makes nature merely a reflection of the will, intentions, and actions of God, it is essentially most anthropocentric religion of the world. Because of this reason Lynn White Jr., has blamed Christianity for giving overpowering position to man to rule over nature and other creatures. Christianity for him, is the most anthropocentric religion in the world (143) as their holy book, *The Bible*, itself gives overall emphasis to humans; "Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you: and as I gave you the green plants. I give you everything" (Gen 9:3).

Different disciplines like anthropocentrism also extend non-human nature considering it senseless like machines. To support this conception, famous anthropologist R.G. Frey confronts; "animals cannot have rights because they can't have the thought required for them because they cannot speak" (10). Their primary focus is always for humans giving natural world only an instrumental value and thus, things which cannot speak for their rights can be treated in a way humans like.

Conversely, biocentrism totally opposes anthropocentric perspective of looking at this world as ecocentrics do. It focuses on the natural world and accords it high degree of intrinsic value. Biocentrics believe biosphere to have right to exist for itself, regardless of its usefulness. They always focus and values living organisms and often emphasize upon the value of individual organism as Peeper comments, "Biocentrists demand that humans must value and respect all other living and non-living entities" (76), and expect human beings to exist in harmony with nature.

Biocentrism has been linked to the formation of an ecological consciousness, a consciousness that is based on value attitudes oriented toward the preservation, restoration, and rational use of the natural world. These ideas of universal ethics came to serve as the ideological basis of biocentrism, which sees nature as the most perfect being. It embodies in its principles and prescriptions a balanced respect for nature and future human generations. In this sense, both anthropocentrism and biocentrism are two different perceptions toward nature at the recent times. Although, anthropocentrism is still a dominant perspective, biocentrism and ecocriticism are newly emerged perspectives on environmentalism which view the need of human beings to exist in harmony with nature.

Since the twentieth century, ecocriticism is focusing on the need of human beings to exist in harmony with nature through literary writings intervening the anthropocentric notion of looking at nature as a hostile need to be subdued and dominated. The concept of preserving nature contributes to the health of entire biotic community, including ourselves and ecological study as a means of addressing nature including all human dimensions in it. Ecocritics strongly believe that human beings' unnatural and irrational behavior towards the nature does not destroy the earth rather it destroys human beings themselves as Joseph Bruchac depicts:

If we see "the earth" as the web of life that sustains us, then there is no question that the web is weakened, that the earth is sick. But if we look at it from another side, from the view of the living earth itself, then the sickness is embedded in human beings, and if carried to its illogical conclusions, the sickness will not kill the earth, it will kill us. (495)

Ecological writers, therefore, reject the hierarchical concept of anthropocentrism. Such ecocritical ideas are a move beyond anthropocentrism towards a biocentric

outlook because "the biocentric stance of deep ecology may be understood as focusing evolutionary theory and the science of ecology on to the idiom of humanism to expose and overcome the unwarranted claim that humans are unique subjects and speakers" (Manes 22).

Both ecocritics and biocentrics consider humans as members of the earth's community where, there is a complex web of interconnected elements in the universe. But, for anthropologists, humans only hold hierarchically superior position to nature and they do have full rights to value it in a way they like. At present, when, environment is worsening day by day, increase of environmental awareness is only a means to balance the situation which is becoming possible through ecocritical and biocentric worldview.

#### Deep Ecological Movement: An Essential Part of Green Movement

The term 'deep ecology' was first introduced by Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess in 1973. Since then, it has become a philosophical basis of truly green practices and lifestyles for several writers. Arne Naess has introduced it as, "the aim of the supporters of the deep ecology movement is not a slight reform of our present society, but substantial reorientation of our whole civilization" (Naess 4). Deep ecologists, therefore, aim for a sustainable development of a society, without separating humans or anything else-from natural environment. They see the world as a network of phenomena that are fundamentally interconnected and interdependent and recognize the intrinsic value of all living beings.

Deep ecology has become enormously influential within a short period of time. This philosophy is not only about changing personal consciousness away from human-centeredness or anthropocentrism; it is also about voluntary simplicity and a needed spiritual change. In Peeper's view, "Deep ecology fundamentally rejects the



dualistic view of humans and nature as separate and different. It holds that humans are intimately *a part* of the natural environment: they and nature are *one*" (17). So, it discusses over the basic questions concerning the people's way of treating nature.

Deep ecology is thus, concerned with the geography of an ecological society. It features decentralized, small-scale, autonomous, self-reliant regions and communities. It emphasizes us to feel ourselves as a part of the place and its community and stand for its protection. It is because of these reasons; deep ecology has left its influence throughout the green movement. It also informs us that fabricated environment of the city and the developed countryside destroys 'nature' rather than being part of a natural evolution (Peeper 30).

In western thought, most of the times, humans are viewed as outside of nature. This western thought has given us a strong human-nature dualism. The relation of humans to nature is treated as an oppositional one. Nowadays, a significant exception to such neglect within environmental philosophy seems to be found in deep ecology. Val Plumwood states deep ecology as locating "the problem area in human-nature relations in the separation of humans and nature, and it provides a solution for this in terms of the identification of self with nature" (95).

Instead, 'shallow ecology' stands totally in contrast to deep ecology. It only provides human centered views. It views humans as above or outside of nature. It only includes the biotic factors because it centers upon the health of humans and their contribution in the developed countries. In it, earth becomes the puppet to human hands. Humans get whole freedom to value earth in any way they like and the focus is given only upon the usefulness of nature.

Shallow ecology studies nature in a surface level and believes that the major ecological problems can be resolved within and with the continuation of industrial

capitalist society whereas deep means to ask deeper questions and not stay on the surface. So, deep orientation understands that industrial society has caused the earth-threatening ecological crisis and paying attention to social questions is a necessary part of human mobilization towards a deep ecological world. It is because, even having different characteristics as species; humans are still subject to the ecological laws and restraints as other organisms.

Following Commoner's first and third laws of ecology, that "everything is connected to everything else" (33) and "nature knows best" (41); deep ecologists have made an agreement to live with the nature and not against it. In this matter, John Seed has put forward a significant example that in deep ecocriticism, "I am protecting the rainforest" develops into "I am part of the rainforest protecting myself". As humans' faith itself is interconnected with the biosphere, humans are subject to natural laws. Therefore, protection of rainforest is not for the nature's self rather it is for the betterment of us. Deep ecology, thus, merges self with other in a unifying process which believes everything to be indistinguishable from everything else.

Similarly, Deep ecology movement overlooks the environmental concerns that are central to urban life because it believes nature to be the best knower of everything which is more clearly viewed in rural settings. It therefore always insists upon the fact that wild nature alone can provide the experience needed to promote self-realization and biocentric equality which are the basics of deep ecological movement. It therefore always rejects anthropocentric conception of looking at nature. "It hopes to replace andocentric with a biocentric view that displaces the human" (Bennett 29).

We all know that human interference upon nature has been increasing day by day. Therefore, like other ecocritics, deep ecologists also expect all humans to be

transformed at the level of individual consciousness because when enough people change their view of their superiority over nature, it takes no time for the change of whole society. Except this, deep ecocriticism not only relies itself on ecological sciences but it gives equal priority to emotional and intuitive knowledge. When each individual starts applying this "eco-wisdom" to everyday lifestyle, he/she gets the holistic philosophy that can bind together humans and the non-human world and everyone will be able to value all animate and inanimate objects equally.

### **Nature as Culture in American Indian Literature**

At this time of environmental injuries and disruption through human exploitation, bioregional learning to live in place has become an important issue because sustainable life depends on how we use and conserve our resources and our environment. For some years we have begun to think about preserving our environment for the sake of our sustenance. But, indigenous people always considered this universe and its elements a valuable part of human life since their origin. Nearly ninety percent of world recognized cultures are indigenous ones. Therefore, to recognize the rights of indigenous people and minority communities can become an important way to protect natural resources and environmental quality.

Indigenous people of any place are generally considered to possess distinctive culture in which, they traditionally, have a deeply rooted sense of place and relationship with wholeness of the natural world. They like to live in their traditional homelands in harmony with other creatures of the world. Even if they are poorest and more oppressed, they possess valuable ecological knowledge and act as the guardians of nature because their unique cultures are disappearing, along with biological diversity as natural habitats are destroyed to satisfy industrialized world appetites for resources.

Indigenous knowledge itself is a gift from the creator which not only instructs humanity but assigns roles and responsibilities to all creatures also. For them, self exists within a world that is in a flux. They live in their particular relationship with creation. Their knowledge can not be separated from the land. They always represent a body of ancient thought, experience and action living in close contact with nature.

Nature has been ignored in most of the Western cultures but, still Native Americans, the indigenous ones are so closely connected with nature that whatever

they do, they follow the instructions of nature. They act as the primary guardians and sustainable users of vast American habitat. Their emotional experience of their connectedness with the earth has enabled them to recognize the healing of the earth and the healing of human spirits as one. They have maintained a less dualistic spirit of interconnectedness with the non-human world. They can be instructive for the Europeans in terms of understanding the ecosphere more closely.

Native Americans behave with the nature as an animate object. For them, no life form is inferior to one-another. Rather they sometimes present humans as less powerful in front of other beings because we humans are only a part of the vast universe. Native people always have a strong sense of community constructed with the harmonious relationship between human and nature. The earth is a mother creator and all other are necessary part of it. All creatures have been provided equal importance because all life is sacred. Therefore, their actions are always put forward for the sake of community.

It is because of these reasons, American Indian religion is called pantheistic one which regards all the objects in nature as sacred and equal. One cannot live happily ignoring the relationship with other creatures because one's survival is dependent on the existence of another. Consequently, what happens in one part of the ecosystem will impact another.

These tribal people's culture is alive because their myths and stories are alive. They are the sources of strength to them in a world dominated by urbanized culture. They share different myths: Grand Mother, in American Indian myth, is an important creature because she stands for mother creator, creates myths, and relates them to the spirit of the land. The Great Spirit is found in most American Indian beliefs as an unknown power in everything--the air, a rock, the sky etc. It is often seen as the great

creator of life and the universe. Coyote, another popular spirit in many tribes like Navajo, Zuni, Sioux, and Chinook etc. is responsible for sorrow and death and the creation of humans and the Milky Way. Raven, on the other hand, could bring both good and change himself into a bird or a human or an animal. Similarly, according to their tribal myths, Kachinas controlled everything -the sky, water, plants, animals, and protected human and brought them good fortune.

In all their myths, every creature of this universe inhabits equal importance in the continuation of the cyclic world. They might seem superstitious to Europeans but for Native Americans, these myths explain their belief that the universe consists of their world which they are sharing from generation to generation.

Not only because of tribal myths Native American tradition is rich in itself but it inhabits songs and tales which celebrate natural beauty of the world. Storytelling performs an integral part of Native American Tradition. Through these means, tribes and nations communicate from generations to generations their feasts, legends and religious beliefs. These could become a powerful means of bringing people together because these stories still have same power of representation.

For the people of Native America, the land and the stories are inseparable. These Indigenous ones' written words of their myths are the pictures of the spoken word. It sounds as if they are speaking to us. Tribal people never fear to go anywhere around their tribes, because since their childhood they were familiarized through their thirty thousands years tradition of storytelling.

Except the religion and culture, Native American identity itself is dependent upon the identity of their native landscape. They connect human culture to the physical world. Their subjects are related with the interconnections between nature and culture. All have same source of origin, the earth, and all life forms are related to

one another. They have become able to prove that any action toward the natural world is eventually an action toward one's self and toward one's culture and Jean Arnold clearly puts it when she explains:

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, that every penny of economic worth ultimately comes of the natural world, and that we owe our very existence to its processes. To disregard the fact that human cultural production is embedded in the natural world is to entertain a selective vision that places humankind in a pre-Copernican position of centrality it does not deserve. (Arnold 1089)

For the authenticity of such native ideas, a nineteenth century Duwamish leader, Chief Seattle, asserts:

The air is precious to red man. For all things the same breath—the beast, the trees, the man, they all share the same breath [. . .] What is man without the beasts? If all the beasts were gone, men would die from a great loneliness of spirit. For whatever happens to the beasts, soon happens to man. All things are connected [. . .] Whatever befalls the earth befalls the sons of the earth. (xx)

Over the last century, this statement has emerged as the single most eloquent, succinct, and publicly accessible distillation of Native American nature wisdom.

In part of their literatures, among many Native American writers, Leslie Marmon Silko, N. Scott Momaday, Simon Ortiz, and Paula Gunn Allen are some contemporary writers who regard landscape as a necessary part of human life. In their view, all animate and inanimate objects of earth have equal consciousness inherently.

Adamson also mentions their books as the books about "the search to find ways to understand our cultural and historical differences and similarities in order to arrive at a better agreement of what the human role in the nature is and should be" (5). Their texts are an example of ecological criticism that expands narrow concept of nature and place.

While commenting on Momaday, A. LaVonne Brown Ruff believes Momaday to be always emphasizing the importance of place in his writings (9) because he is enticed within the native rituals, ceremonies and myths like other Native American writers are. His writings are always concerned with the Indian's perception of the human relationship to nature. In "Native American Attitudes to the environment", Momaday calls this knowledge or understanding of the natural world, "reciprocal appropriation," by which, he means that human beings invest themselves "in the landscape, and at the same time incorporate the landscape into [their] own most fundamental experience" (80). His example is a story of an expectant father who refuses to hunt deer even though he and his family are hungry as the man explains, "it is inappropriate that I should take life just now when I am expecting the gift of life" (82).

Momaday has developed much of his life safeguarding oral tradition and other aspects of human life. His Pulitzer Prize winning novel, *House Made of Dawn*, starts with the description of land itself: "There was a land [. . .]" (1). This sort of direct start naturally compels the readers to feel and understand the value of landscape within human life. Even at its end, he relates the dancer's dancing steps with the earth so that to create a perfect harmony with the land. He describes reciprocal dependence when he compares an old Indian farmer's sense of the land with a white man's. The Indian has "the feel of the blade against the earth" and "the touch of the [corn] fronds



and tassels on his neck and arms" (65). In contrast, the Euro- American farmer's response to the land is hatred: "[He] began to hate the land, began to think of it as some kind of enemy, his own very personal and deadly enemy" (123). For the Native American, the land is alive, and the farmer interacts with the environment; the corn tassels reciprocate. For the Euro-American the land is outside himself, separate, objectified, alien, and therefore ultimately dead.

The protagonist of the novel, Abel faces alienation effect in the modern world because he is only linked through his imagination to legend and the sacred storytelling of his Kiowa ancestry. He becomes able to get his identity only when he mingles himself with the identity of the landscape. Similar incident is presented in Silko's novel, *Ceremony*. The protagonist, Tayo is a distracted character from Second World War effects. He feels estranged from his land and his culture. Because he had a strong sense of interconnection with the land in the past, he determines to gain his lost identity. At the end of the novel, his return to his culture brings renewed spirit and vision within himself.

In his poem, *Headwaters*, Momaday meditates on his ancestry that evolved from the lake and land in the mountain where he is seated. He talks about his Kiowa origins who believe their tribe to be born from the earth which was original and mourns for this originality because nowadays, acculturation has been corrupting it. He writes:

Noon in the intermountain plain:  
 There is scant telling of the marsh-  
 A log, hollow and weather-stained,  
 An insect at the mouth, and moss-  
 Yet waters rise against the roots,

Stand brimming to the Stalks. What moves?

what moves on this archaic force

was wild and welling at the sources. (435)

Momaday establishes a close relation between nature and his Native American culture representing log, a part of nature, as their origin place and water as purified and sacred having life and energy. Kiowa origin was clear like headwaters but is gradually collapsed with the Whites' evasion whom they believe to be exploiters of nature. He puts question marks while wondering for the lost purity of his tribal power. This impurity is marked by stillness of the water. It is a sacred Native American culture which has been destroyed by the assimilation of other impure cultures like whites'. So, Momaday's tone is nostalgic in terms of its search for roots and at the loss of its tradition.

Likely, Silko's poem, *Prayer to the Pacific*, is a meditation upon the origin myth of her own Pueblo tribe in which, the Pacific Ocean is the creator of every thing they expect, even the rain. The Laguna Pueblo people believe that they came from China, across the Pacific Ocean, on the back of the giant turtles thirty thousand year's ago. In this Native American legend, China, an eastern region, the source of Native American's origin, is a place where earth is worshipped as the mother, and ocean as the source of everything. This poem reflects her feeling of awe and respect for the tribal myth as well as the sea when she ends her poem citing:

And so from that time

immemorial,

as the old people say,

rain clouds drift from the west

gift from the ocean.

Green leaves in the wind

Wet earth on my feet

swallowing raindrops

clear from China. (25- 33: 179)

The construction of the poem itself orients towards wave of the sea. This is Silko's adoration of her place of origin. A raindrop as a natural phenomenon causes the dry earth to become wet. The comparison of the myth of origin with the big Pacific in the last line of the first stanza suggests the speaker's reverence of the myth as well as that of the ocean. It is a timeless incident of the mythical origin of the tribe that she is meditating upon. And probably it is this faith in the myth that brings rain to the drought-ridden land of the Southwest. She believes; such gifts can only be granted by China, the origin place. Schwenienger believes; such American Indian myths share "a strong sense of the power of nature" and writes, "All these nature writers describe environment as a humanist and keep an account of their experience with the natural world" (14).

Silko's look at east as the source of Native American origin resembles with the thought of Hindu religion as it is said; "It is simply a pious exaggeration to say that Hinduism and Indian philosophy are directly nurtured by the Vedas and are continuation of the Vedic spirit" (Panikkar 14). May be because of this resemblance in the thought of origin stories; both Hindus and Indians share common belief about nature and its relationship with humans. Both the religions worship nature as a mother earth and all other creatures to have equal value in terms of their use. Through her writing, Silko reveals Native Americans' myths' harmonious relationship with nature.

Like Momaday and Silko's writings, Simon Ortiz and Paula Gunn Allen's writings say more about their native land and the tradition of respect for nature practiced by the native people. Ortiz, a leading Native American poet, reflects a panoramic view of nature in his poems so that to bring us more close to nature. He confesses himself to be only a part of the vast universe: "I must remember/ that I am only one Part/ among many parts/ not a singular eagle/ or one mountain" (Niatum 143).

Because of his interest in his culture and history, Ortiz embraced his Acoma culture sharing it with others with the help of literary writings. He describes events of everyday life and how our industrial culture has effected environment and society. We can find his fear from alienated life in his writings as it can be seen in Momaday and Silko's texts. Stephen claims that, "His works provide a reader with the sense of self respect that they need in order to stand up for their rights and preserve their way of life" (3). In "The Wisconsin Horse", Ortiz tells of a frightened horse that cannot break free either physically or spiritually. In Litz's view, this is a symbol of:

Ortiz's feeling that people are constrained by the world around them. His writings express a desire for his people to return to their roots through family, culture, and spirit. He reminds us all that spiritual well-being, not material wealth is the heart of us all and needs to be preserved. (500)

In the same way, another Native American writer Paula Gunn Allen also gives emphasis upon the inseparable and unbreakable relationship between human and nature in her writings and mentions, "We Are the land, and the land is mother to us all" (127). She brings forth the fact that the nature is not only physically tied with human beings but it also has similar connection with aesthetics and spirituality. Allen

believes, Indians "have a concept of a circular, dynamic universe in which all things are related and are of one family" (1).

In all and all, these Native American writers speak about their respect and reverence for the land, the environment and the human interrelatedness to it. In this process, they invest themselves in the landscape, and at the same time incorporate the landscape into their own most fundamental experiences. Their culture may seem common to other cultures in many respects because they value the land as other nature lovers do. Even then, what is uncommon in them is that they first love it either it is useful or not as Momaday has said; "You say that I use the land, and I reply, yes it is true; but it is not the first truth. The first truth is that I love the land: I see that it is beautiful; I delight in it. I am alive in it" (40). It is because of this, these aboriginal one's relationship with other life forms come from a deep respect that is ultimately self-interested. Yet they do speak on behalf of the environment. If these people loose their land, they loose their uniqueness and identity.

### **Nature in Silko's writings: Silko as an Environmental writer**

Widely known as a Native American speaker, Leslie Marmon Silko has a very deep understanding of nature for which her upbringing has played a significant role. In her childhood, Silko was introduced with different creation stories, myths, and rituals of her tribe by her grandmother and other relatives. Her grandmother had a Mexican ancestry; father was from Laguna and White ancestry, and mother was born in Montana plains. So, Silko is of mixed White, Hispanic, and Native American ancestry. As a child, she got an opportunity to have deep touch with different cultures and nature and this awareness of nature-culture relationship has put her in place of nature writer.

Silko was born in 1948 in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and grew up at Laguna Pueblo, a Native American Pueblo community in New Mexico where her family had lived for generations. She first attended schools managed by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and later she went to catholic schools in Albuquerque. She earned a B.A. degree in English from the University of New Mexico in 1969 and then taught for two years at Navajo community college in Tsaile, Arizona. She later spent two years in Ketchikan, Alaska, before returning to teach at the University of New Mexico from 1976 to 1978. In 1978 Silko moved to Tucson, Arizona. From 1980 to 1986, she was professor of English at the University of Arizona.

Many of Silko's early short stories and poems were collected in anthologies of Native American writing. Her first book, the poetry collection, *Laguna Woman* (1974), combined meditations on Native American tradition with vivid descriptions of the natural landscape. Her much acclaimed novel, *Ceremony* (1977), forges a connection between the shared past of the tribe and the individual life of a Native American returning home after World War II. *Storyteller*, an anthology of poetries,

short fictions, traditional stories, and photographs, appeared in 1981. After her first novel, *Ceremony*, Silko's second novel, *Almanac of the Dead*, appeared in 1991. In 1996, her essay collection, *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit*, was published which is structured like a spider's web circling around the Native American tradition and their connection to the land. She has received a National Endowment for the Arts fellowship, a Pulitzer Prize, and a three-year grant from the MacArthur Foundation.

Generally, Silko is known for her stories and poems that claim her faith in the Laguna rituals, myths and way of life. As she is a female writer, many critics narrow down her writings also in the context of minority women's writings as Danielson expresses; "Silko reinvents those traditions so as to reclaim women's power that has been lost or reduced through colonialism" (1595). Similarly, because of her Native American origin, Silko's texts are summarized as the protest against White authority which decimates the American Indian culture. Supporting this, a prominent critic Paul Taylor writes:

In all her writings, Silko has developed an ideology of secrecy that serves to distinguish Indian identity in story from lies that have imprisoned the image of the Indian and his sacred lore in Eurocentric secular frames. (41)

There are many critics who have claimed such issues in her texts, yet there are many other critics who claim her to be a contemporary nature critic.

Now, at this time, Silko is universally praised as an environmentalist because each of her writing has deep concern with her surroundings. She closely observes both nature and human nature relating it with ethnic themes, motifs, and genres. Traditional Indian culture is holistic, natural, and communal for her. She, therefore, in all her writings, considers nature to be the basis of every culture and its civilization.

In her introduction to collection of critical essays on Silko's texts, Linda Krumholz, through detailed examination, exposes the connection between the cycles of nature and culture, the individual and the community. Similarly, Daniel White states:

One of the self-imposed duties of the nature writer is to raise awareness of our "responsibility, something that traditional native peoples have practiced as naturally as breathing. Silko presses the same issue from the Native American perspectives. In so doing, she is not merely instructing other cultures; she is taking a stand in defense of her people and, by extension, the earth. (143)

Besides, as Silko grew up in Pueblo community, she clearly mentions about them in her writings. 'Pueblo Indians' is a collective term used to refer to the many native peoples of the Pueblo crescent located in the Southwestern United States. They believe upon a view that nothing can be improved within itself because "survival depends upon harmony and cooperation not only among human beings, but among all things-the animate and the less animate, since rocks and mountains were known to move, to travel occasionally" (Silko 267). Pueblo people feature all creatures as relatives. For them, man, as a social animal, cannot live in isolation as Daniel White has said:

Silko acknowledges, as did her Pueblo ancestors, that all humans are fallible. Indeed, Pueblo teachings depend upon an awareness of such shortcomings, and Silko's goal is to exhibit how her people have heeded the lessons from their mistakes. They had to, or they would have perished. Pueblo wisdom is gained from trial and error in an arid, unforgiving land where



even the tiniest mistake can be fatal. An individual transgressor may not be only one at risk: the harmful actions of one may have grim consequences for all. (142)

Silko's such attachment with her community's stories and rituals has led her to become an environmental critic. Taking this Nature-Culture issue, her writings can be analyzed as representing earth as the foundation, the basis out of which emerges everything that exists.

#### Natural Awareness in Silko's Writings

In almost all of Silko's writings, we find the influence of nature. Her main source of writing is nature and most of her literary creations emanate from natural environment. Culture becomes the source of aestheticism in her community. Therefore, while talking about nature- culture issue relating it with creation myths, ceremonies, and storytelling traditions of her community, Silko finds a sort of pleasure and satisfaction. Native Americans share a belief that advocates in support of mother earth in a way Hinduism supports her. Both the cultures value everything equally. If cow is sacred animal for Hindus, buffalo is same for Native Americans. In both beliefs, everything emanates from same source, the earth.

Grandmother Spider for Native Americans, and God Brahma for Hindus, is believed to be the creators of the whole universe. Both cultures have deep ecological understanding as they never value anything individually. For them, everything is connected with everything else. They believe in the sacred hoop of relationship in which, all beings--animals, plants, humans, and land-- are related to each other. But, in modern context, such harmonious relationship between all the beings is in crisis because of the result of acculturation. It has caused separation of the people from the

land and other spirits. Silko therefore stresses upon the need for a life-centered rather than a human-centered system of environmental ethics.

In a sense, Silko advocates for biocentric world view opposing the existing anthropocentric conception which is strongly prevalent in mainstream Western tradition. In all of her writings, we cannot separate the earth, the word, the speaker of the word, and the stories. They exist within the same lines of dependence, the biosphere. This research paper will be particularly based on her collection of stories and poems, *Storyteller*, and an essay collection, *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit*.

Since Native American culture is always directed from nature, Silko's *Storyteller*, a collection of short stories, photographs, and autobiography includes their recurrent issues of earth and nature as the basis of their ethics, religion, and life. This text has established Silko as a significant and dazzlingly original voice because here she struggles to maintain a sense of distinct being. This text instructs the reader in a Native American way of reading. While listening to the storytelling tradition, we readers earn the way from which Laguna Pueblo cultures create meaning.

When Silko talks about storytelling tradition, she does not mean it as something that is done at bedtime for children. Rather, she is talking about something that comes out of an experience and an understanding of the original view of nature in which we are all part of a whole. In this process of storytelling tradition, the audience, and the listeners are necessarily needed. It is a highly nature conscious consideration of the process of storytelling, an exploration into the ways the Laguna Pueblo society get meaning from the mother earth which appears to be the foundation of their culture.

Still, United States is controlled by white Christian thought; Silko represents this US culture as the main exploiter of native culture and their surrounding. In a sense, rejecting the western concepts of the individual, Silko conceives the autobiographical subject and brings forth the Native American conception of individual's story as part of the collective stories of the community. Arnold Kurpat therefore argues that in *Storyteller* "for all the polyvocal openers of Silko's work, there is always the unabashed commitment to Pueblo ways as a reference point" (65). It is therefore a text including many stories, poems, and photographs in the context of ecological awareness of the Native Americans.

Though Silko has not divided *Storyteller* into a particular section, this anthology can be understood from six different sections: Survival (1- 53), Yellow Woman (54- 99). Drought (100- 53), Rain (156- 86), Spirits (187- 11), and Coyote (212- 67). These different sections share different themes.

While meditating upon nature's essentiality for "survival", Silko grounds the title story, "Storyteller", upon the Alaskan landscape which plays active role in her story. Native Americans' attachment with nature is focused with the vivid description of Eskimo's surroundings through out the story. At its start, Silko describes the daily activity of the sun as she writes, "Everyday the sun came up a little lower on the horizon [. . .]" (17). In the process of continuing the story, she forwards different ill activities of whites against the earth and its creatures.

Silko's faith for the sustainable use of resources is presented with the native people's positive attachment to nature giving less importance to dominant Christian view. Each time, whites as anthropocentricists, are unable to understand nature as whole. The old storyteller in the story says; "They only come when there is

something to steal. The fur animals are too difficult for them to get now, and the seals and fish are hard to find. Now they come for oil deep in the earth".

In contrast, Indians share the land with all other residents without hierarchical distinction. They understand the reciprocal relationship among all creatures. They love and care animals and use their parts but only after they offer ceremonial attempt to nature. The village people laugh at ill activities of the whites as Silko writes:

The village people had gathered to watch the white men and laugh as they drove the giant machines one by one, off the steel ramp into the bogs: as if sheer numbers of vehicles would somehow make the tundra solid. (23)

For the natives, machines can never win over nature as it is just the by-product of the same earth. Eskimos feel proud among themselves and the natural lifestyle they live. Though the modern world is too much mechanical, technological and comfortable, the only thing it provides is separation from the land. Here, the Eskimo tribes are far away from such alienation effect. Even if they are poor in terms of economy, they are rich in their tradition, culture and thought. In such crisis also, the most important thing they have not lost is their stories which emanates from their experience of nature. They forget their pain while listening to their stories.

From "Storyteller", Silko presents excessive white impact upon her culture. The protagonist in the story, an Eskimo girl brought up within native rituals, ceremonies and myths, is familiar with each and every actions of nature. The girl is orphan as her parents are killed by the urban culture of alcoholism. The red tin of alcohol, provided by a white man had poisoned her parents. This red tin symbolizes urban culture, a destroyer of nature as it lies idly rusting away in the grass.

In the process of taking revenge with the white man, the girl takes him to the river bank, a place unknown to white man. Daniel White has cited in his "Antidote to Desecration" that "The girl uses her intimate knowledge of the river, the brittle ice, and the blinding white canvas of the entire landscape to destroy the oppressor and restore balance to her world" (144). The man's face was "twisted and scarlet from the exertion and the cold" (30) but the cold did not make any effect upon the girl's face because she is familiar with the nature and she understands all actions of nature:

She was familiar with the river, down to the instant ice flexed into airline fractures, and the cracking bone-silver sounds gathered momentum with the opening ice until the churning gray water was set free. She stopped and turned to the sound of the river and the rattle of swirling ice fragments where he fell through. (30)

At the same time, silence looms throughout the story, a powerful, and cold, overwhelming silence appears to swallow up the white man. The protagonist's vision of the natural world and the white man's falling down to the ice is the only symbol of his death. Silko writes; "she saw something red and suddenly it was as she had remembered all those years" (30). This "red" had a deep connection with the death of her parents. It was the color in the same tin of poisoned alcohol which her parents had drunk. Silko imagines the white man's death into the ice, the land, the mother earth.

It is the same place from where the girl returns safely yet, the white man is killed because he is the exploiter of nature and natural phenomena. While following the girl, his intention was to exploit her. But, it is the nature, in the form of a frozen river which helped her to take revenge with the selfish man whom Silko describes as

"a parasite, exploring not only the fur-bearing animals and the fish but also the Yupik people themselves" (qtd in Barnes 1580).

Not only this, as storytelling tradition is an integral part of Native Americans' nature writing, Silko represents the Eskimo girl always spending her time with the old man, the storyteller. Listening to his stories, she gets encouragement to associate herself with the land. Not only the storyteller but the listeners are also crazy about this tradition. Silko depicts a moment:

One night she listened to the old man tell the story all night in his sleep, describing each crystal of ice [. . .] But the last words she heard clearly: "It will take a long time, but the story must be told. There must not be any lies. (26)

The girl is so much influenced from him that at the end of the story, we find her continuing the same ritual of storytelling when waiting in a remote Alaska jail to be interrogated regarding the death of the shopkeeper.

In the jail also, the girl does not consider the white jailor's idea of self-defense. It is ironical that if she hides the truth and describes the shopkeeper's killing incident as an accident, the legal system will be in favor of her. Rather than cheating the truth, she chose to be punished because she does not want to allow the corrupt system to corrupt her or her special relationship with the land. Taylor figures this incident as, "the confrontation of Eskimo with white, a hunted's turn to face the hunter. The girl enters this story herself to reinforce it with her own experience" (42) as if she has eternalized the old Eskimo's story of the giant polar which lost words are uttered as at the end of the story, Silko writes, "and the blue glacier bear turned slowly to face him" (22).

From the protagonist's vision of nature, Silko reflects her perception of the Gussuck/ white world as a hostile, colonizing force bent on destructing the nature and natural phenomena. The story shares the theme that landscape not only serves willing accessories but it can also avenge. While commenting on this story, Silko herself has said, "When humans have blasted and burned the last bit of life from the earth, an immeasurable freezing will descend with a darkness that obliterates the sun" (47).

Another most noted and prize winning piece of *Storyteller* is "Lullaby". Here also, Silko focus upon the Navajo understanding of the natural world for "survival" contrasting with Anglo Americans' oppressive mentality. The start of the story includes references to natural elements like snow, wool, babies, and memories related to it:

The sun had gone down but the snow in the wind gave off its own light. It came in thick tufts like new wool-washed before the weaver spins it. Ayah reached out for it like her on babies had, and she smiled when she remembered how she had laughed at them. (43)

The main character of the story, Ayah, searches her babies into the natural phenomena but suddenly she remembers that she has lost them for forever and laughs at it. Since the start of the story, Ayah mourns the loss of her family, language and tradition. Silko combines Navajo tradition with modern cultural elements presenting Ayah in order to make meaning of the lost tradition. The respect for nature remains throughout this tradition. Most importantly, Silko pinpoints upon whites' unreasonable imposition of their will among the Navajo community.

Ayah is cheated and distorted by the whites' impractical activities. The only thing she has now, is, memory of lost tradition, language, and sacred compact with the earth. Internalizing the natural phenomena, Ayah tries to avoid her son Jimmie's

memories. She has put on Jimmie's blanket upon her head. This Blanket reminds her blankets made from her mother. It not only signifies warmth, but comfort, love and care that we get from our loved ones because, "The blankets her mother made were soft and woven so tight that rain rolled off them like birds' feathers" (43). From generation to generation, it surpasses tradition of love and care. She also remembers her grandma who had given her "wooden combs". Everything Navajo people used, were originated from natural elements. Therefore, they were the original ones.

To remark the ill effects of technological development and ongoing ecological degradation, Silko pictures Jimmie's death in helicopter crash when he was involved in war. As modernity has always taken away peace from us, Silko points on alienated life of Ayah. Jimmie's death is not only the death of her son rather it is a loss of heritage, culture and natural way of life. Jakoski remarks these incidents in his words:

Even the sacred compact with the earth seems broken in the persistent draught. Where once the land had produced all that the people needed wool and bright dyes for strong, water proof blankets, leather for leggings and shoes, meat hung on the rafters to dry. Ayah and Chato now find themselves reduced to the dull Army blankets, boots with holes in them, and a meager welfare check that buys only dead flour and tinned peaches. (90)

Silko represents the empty and harsh present life of Ayah and her husband, surrounded by the strangers/ whites. Ayah loses her other two children Danny and Ella because of her husband, and white doctor, and policeman's treachery. She hates whites when they gaze at her children like the "lizard watches the fly" (45). At first, Ayah is able to protect them from white doctor and his wife when "She ran south into



the foothills of juniper trees and black lava rock" (45). Even then, next time, her learning of white language to sign causes her to lose her children.

Language is a bearer of culture as it emanates from the same nature which is the basis of any culture. Ayah's learning of strange culture's language becomes the reason of her sense of loss throughout her life. She loses her children because she did not listen to the old ones who always told her, "learning their language or any of their ways: it endangered you" (47). It is the urban language of the individualized ones which does not value others' emotions and therefore parts her from her children. Unknowingly, children have lost their tribal language and culture. Along with their real mother, they have lost their tribal identity as they are far from their natural surrounding.

Silko strongly opposes the utility purpose of the whites when she writes about the most painful incident in Ayah's life. When Chato was suffering from his leg injury, rather than providing him treatment, his white officer discards him from his job. It is those non-whites who value humans as long as the man can be exploited. This utilitarian concept has made them cruel ones who forget their moral responsibility even towards human beings. Through out the story, Ayah's reconciliation bound up within the memories of the past unites her spiritually with the natural world. Snow in the story recalls both weaving and dying of the creatures within its lap.

At the end, Ayah appears singing the traditional lullaby during the death of her husband:

*The earth is your mother,*

*she holds you.*

*The Sky is your father.*

*he protects you.*

*Sleep,*

*Sleep.*

*Rainbow is your sister.*

*she loves you.*

*The winds are your brothers,*

*they sing to you.*

*Sleep,*

*Sleep.*

*We are together always*

*We are together always*

*There never was a time*

*When this*

*was not so. (51)*

Thorough out the story, Silko uses an imagery of nature: earth mother and sky father, rainbow sister and wind brother. Rainbow here stands for the correct and beautiful life that Navajos expect to gain from their ideal life of enduring pain as a part of their life. This rainbow life takes them to the original life that is harmoniously balanced with the universe. The whole "Lullaby" is a suggestion for children, for newer generations that the entire universe is family of entire natural world.

Similar to these two stories, entire part of the Survival section presents stories as a means of survival in an oral culture like Laguna Pueblo. It highlights upon the danger of white interpretations of Indian lives and stories.

Similarly, in the entire section of *Storyteller*, the Yellow Woman section focuses on woman's role and sexuality as a necessary part of natural process. It sets

up interactions between the old and new stories, which means that change in cultural processes and oral tradition is not inimical to Pueblo people rather it is acceptable to them. The most important part of the section is the connection between the human world and the animal in a story, "Yellow Woman". It follows myth about the Whirlwind man who belongs to the wind and he and Kochininako/ Yellow woman "travel swiftly/ this whole world/ with dust and with windstorms" (54).

It is because of sexual intimacy, Kochininako and the buffalo-man are physically united which joins two worlds. It displays the equal and constant relationship that we humans are sharing since the beginning of the world. Yellow woman brings both the harsh loveliness of the land and mystery and strength of the man together. The power that attracts her to the buffalo man is human power, the power that operates the natural world. In earlier times, fertility was so highly valued because it was a natural process. Yellow Woman's strength of crossing the traditional boundaries and having sex was her real beauty. The sex here is therefore just a metaphor for the natural power.

Silko, here, appears to be a natural storyteller with the sense of the beauty of the physical world. She longs for communion with man, nature and spirit throughout the story. The Buffalo-man is associated with life giving force like the water, river, and willow. At the end, Pueblos are saved from starvation when buffalo man promises to feed them providing his flesh.

In part of Draught and Rain section, the infertile Southwest Pueblo life and their ritual is focused most importantly in which the stories begin with an emphasis on drought as disruptive force and ends on rain to show the balance between the two, drought and rain, necessary to perpetuate balance in the world. In this section, the poem, "Prayer to the Pacific", is based upon the speaker's wish to ask for rain to the

Pacific Ocean because the western part of the United States is troubled from dryness. The speaker travels to the ocean from "Southwest land of sand rock" (179). In Pueblo Laguna Pueblo culture, the Pacific Ocean is not the ordinary "largest" ocean of the world; it is the mother of the tribe who always helps them in trouble.

The poem ends up with the speaker's imagination that the cloud is still coming from China across the vast Ocean; it is the place from where Laguna Pueblo believed they were emanated. The rain in the lines, "Green leaves in the wind/ wet earth on my feet/ swallowing raindrops/ clear from China", is personal as well as universal in its blessing (179). Not only the speaker's body, but also her mind responds to the rain, as nature sends them the blissful rain to get rid of problems.

The Spirit section in a text, *Storyteller*, grounds upon the representation of spirituality. Even if it is given less importance in mainstream discourse of America, Silko redefines Native American spirituality as a social power of their community. In this section, she connects people and people, people and the natural world, and the living and the dead with the help of spiritual power. It also validates Pueblo spiritual knowledge as a true way of facing scientific, empirical, and objective challenges of the mainstream culture.

The Spirit section starts with Grandpa Hank's photograph taken in an easy chair by sitting and reading a book (187). His Navajo friend, who used to come to yearly Laguna feast to exchange gifts and friendship, never returned after learning about his friend, Hank's death. It happens so because there is a feeling of irreparable loss at the loss of those we love. This section ends with the photo of Grandma A'mooh (211). Along with her photo, "It seems like a good idea", is a story Grandma A'mooh heard as a child. In this story, Laguna people forgive Navajos knowing the fact that they had stolen Laguna sheep. It is because Pueblo understanding shares the

belief upon generosity towards all. They even believe that from such mistakes, people learn many lessons.

The photographs of Grandpa Hank and Grandma A'mooh, share Silko's family spirits representing the spirit of Laguna Pueblo. In Pueblo oral storytelling tradition, these photographs convey a sense of place which unites the individual and communal memories and visions of human life. Grandpa's friendship with the Navajo man, and his friend's attachment to Laguna feast and Grandmother's pride in the story of Laguna Pueblo generosity exhibit their ethics that generate pride and power for Silko. It is not only about the dead spirits, but also about the communal stories and rituals that evoke memories and bring renewal through the evocation of recollections.

In the last section of the text, Coyote stories are the stories which raise questions and pass judgments on the white world. These six thematic sections construct a forceful inter- textual reading process. The text begins with the description of Native American tribe in danger under a white system of values and power which has dislocated, encroached upon, and subsumed their perspectives also. But, it concludes by supporting their visions and values in interaction with the changing world. Throughout the text, Silko has suggested all of us that problems that come in our life, can be solved only when we are together to fight against it. This togetherness is possible through storytelling tradition. It is a way of seeing ourselves, and the world around us.

In the same manner, in her collection of critical essays, *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit*, on Native American life, Silko exposes the connection between the cycles of nature and culture, the individual and the community. Her essays begin with the theme of land, the earth at the center of human identity and imagination. The entire collection of critical essays establishes her relationship with nature by

presenting Laguna Pueblo people who only share communal truth. Nature is predominantly revealed in every context with her richness because, landscape, for them, is not just a part of region that humans can grasp in a single view, but it is directly related to the same mother earth. In a sense, nothing is possible to understand until and unless we go to the existence of earth.

Humans are thought to be the ruler upon all other beings in some religions like Christianity. Nevertheless, Native Americans see the deeper attachments within all creations of the universe. Silko has always wished to alter these existing views of looking at human superiority to nature. Therefore, the common theme we find in her essays is of opposing the destructive tendencies of modern culture with a Pueblo based philosophy of interrelatedness. Ideally also, in pre-Christian time, culture was ecology which was the by-product of mother earth.

Therefore, Silko's essays start from historical patterns of abuse in central Indian policies to the contemporary issues of immigration and also include the interrelation of literature and photography to the relationship between the Southwestern landscape and Pueblo mythology. For her, prevailing anthropocentric values and the governments that sustain them are not merely corrupt; they are in process of destroying whatever they touch. But, she is still hopeful that human race can save itself from such corruption.

In her introduction to *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit*, Silko reveals the development of awareness on conflicting value systems. At her childhood, Pueblo society was steeped in centuries of tradition but now at her adulthood, she finds the same culture troubled by the pervasive influence of modern Euro-American culture. Even then she finds Pueblo people sharing the same faith upon their tradition and originality.

Silko perceives native stories helping to keep world together. She highly values spoken language because languages emerge from our experiences of the world. In her essay, "Language and Literature from a Pueblo Indian Perspective", writing is given secondary position in terms of its value as it is introduced from human beings. She believes, "a written speech or statement is highly suspect because the true feelings of the speaker remain hidden as she reads word that are detached from the occasion and the audience" ( 48).

For her, storytelling tradition shares the growth of our experiences. Besides this, the boundless capacity of language or storytelling tradition is the one which helps to understand the reciprocal relationships of the worldly creatures. Therefore, in all her writings, she focuses on Native American storytelling tradition.

There is a belief in Pueblo community that everything in this world is original and most of the words share stories. Pueblos have been always able to stay with the land as their stories are grounded upon their geographical locations, from actual physical places on the land. From their origin story, we come to know that one holds many things together in a single thought.

In an essay, "Fifth World: The Return of Ma ah Shra True EE, the Giant Serpant", Tse'itsi'nako, Thought Woman thinks of her sister and of everything and this world was created. The whole world is created from the imagination of thought woman:

*Tse'itsi'nako, Thought Woman,  
is sitting in her room  
and whatever she thinks about  
appears.  
She thought of her sisters,*

*Nau'ts'ity'i and I'tcts'ity'i,  
and together they crated the Universe  
this world  
and the four world below.  
Thought Woman, the spider,  
named things and  
as she named them  
they appeared. (124)*

It is because the whole world emerged from same thought, they share equality. Thought Woman's power of including everything within her imagination teaches Native Americans to live in harmony with all. This sort of mythic tradition helps on thinking the mythical deities and the people themselves: we come to know which place, land we belong to and by which place we came. In this essay, she also mentions about ceremonial tendency in which whenever Pueblos perform ritual of sacrifice, they worship nature so that she will not get angry.

Corn Mother, on the other hand, is synonyms with Mother Earth and represents growth, life and the importance of corn as a staple crop of the Pueblo diet. In Pueblo ritual, corn dance is performed to bring rain, increase fertility and to assure an abundance of crops. The dancers' gestures indicate Pueblos' request they offer to natural system. The lowering of the arms signify the request of lowering clouds so that people could get rid of drought; moving the arms in zigzag motion indicates lightening so that rain could fall; and lifting the hands is for the growing stalks of corn. The message we get from their myths is that proper ceremonial offering to corn Mother helps on operating the earth's life process.

In the eyes of Pueblo community, the most powerful creative force in the



universe is Sun Father. He is the representative of masculinity and light. Even if he is most powerful, he has to depend upon Corn mother to have meal. It suggests the interdependence among them. His connection with thought woman is seen in the way he helps her whenever she is in trouble. Representing Pueblo people's interconnection with their deities, Silko brings forth the fact about reciprocal relationships between the community and the outer world. Such stories connect our identity with the land. The stories help on keeping the whole together. Silko's account of the story is similar to her account of white's attempt to dominate nature, Native Americans, and the land.

In the title essay, "Yellow Woman and a beauty of the Spirit", Silko makes clear contrast between Pueblo culture and mainstream culture of United States. She reveals that in Pueblo community, people are judged not in terms of color and outlook, but in terms of their attitudes towards nature; "For them, a person's value lies in how that person interacts with other people, how that person behaves toward the animals and the earth [ . . .]" (61). Such notion of sin, damnation, and racism arrived only when Puritans or the outsiders arrived. But, to the old- time people, coexistence in a world matters a lot.

In Pueblo belief, one gains respect and care only when he/ she respect others. They know that it is only the earth which shares the unity among all creatures and makes no difference between them. If this unity is fragmented, human survival is impossible. However, Euro American's idea of devaluing people in terms of their racism is causing self-destruction. They do so because their culture itself is an outcome of Christian religion which values things and human beings in terms of their use. Therefore, she satires upon Euro American attitudes and says; "most of the definitions of beauty in contemporary Western culture are really codes for determining social status" (65). She values all creatures in equal rank from her

community's perspective. As Pueblo people are more close to nature, they share the concept of organic whole:

In the view of the old-time people, we are all sisters and brothers because the Mother Creator made all of us [. . .] The plants, the birds, fish, clouds, water, even the clay-they all are related to us [. . .] even rocks and waters, have spirit and being. (63)

All things as they were created, exist already in harmony with one- another as long as we do not disturb them. As we all are created from same source, we all acquire equal value. This sister-brother phrase rejects the gender hierarchy among all. If this reciprocal relationship is ignored, nothing remains

In the same essay, Silko discusses upon the Pueblo creation story of a Thought Woman which has been passed through oral tradition from generations. The land shown in the story is an outcome of Thought Woman's imagination. She imagines a possible relation to the surrounding land for the people. Pueblos strongly expect these concepts to be passed on to future generations so that they will be able to understand the importance of all creatures in the universe.

This concept of wholeness has put them separate from Euro-Americans. Nature and its elements for Pueblo people is a living being as all other creatures are: aware, palpable, intelligent, and alive. For this, Silko uses magical realism to portray the earth as human and humans as the earth. In "An Essay on Rocks", Silko gains connection to the land because of her imagination and her attention to the rock. When she was observing something from distance, she got it as beer, which in actuality was a stone (187). It is because of her attention to the rock, she comes closer to its reality. Similarly, to know the essentiality of the land in our life, we just need a careful observation of it.

In her essay, "Interior and Exterior Landscapes", Silko is committed to bring forth the Pueblo wisdom that opposes the dominant culture's waste and desecration. Pueblo people share a belief in which life is thought to be cyclic, nothing is wasted. Even the dead ones were buried in vacant rooms because, "the remains of things- animals and plants, the clay and stones-were treated with respect, because for the ancient people all these things had spirit and being" (26). In this process of dead one's assimilation into a dust, they get one more chance to join themselves with the mother earth. These people better understood the natural things as it was because they were very close to her.

Since its beginning, Laguna Pueblo worldview is generated from oral-storytelling tradition. From it, Silko gains knowledge of connection between the land and human identity, and land and imagination. In this tradition, everyone was a teacher and every activity had a potential to teach a child, and everything had proper meaning. It recognizes our continued existence within a complex web of relationships that they have still kept in balance. Most importantly, she focuses upon how people should relate to each other and on how they should relate to the earth. She strongly supports Laguna Pueblos' belief over the reality that our survival depends upon harmony and cooperation among all the animate and inanimate objects of the world.

To bring forth such concepts, Silko captures different moments which people share with the nature. Whenever she writes about the drought and starvation, it shifts to an emphasis on rain and balances the creative forces necessary to perpetuate fertile relations with the world. Spirit's representation in her texts carries the theme of change that occurs in our life through death and renewal as natural occurrence. In a

sense, whole meaning of her writings reside on understanding of relationship among all creatures.

Similarly, presenting the Pueblo creation stories, Silko speaks of Indian's eternal relationship with the land. In these stories, various female avatars of Mother Nature are related with the creation of the earth, humans, and other life forms. In their storytelling tradition each story starts from the description of nature and ends in the same. Her characters also get their real identity only when they are properly introduced with the land outside like the Eskimo girl as a storyteller in *Storyteller* and the yellow woman as yellow woman in the story of "Yellow Woman".

Not only this, Silko always emphasizes upon this oral tradition as pure and real as it is a tool of expressing the experiences of the world. She believes, stories and beliefs teach us to understand how we have to act to change the world. Her weaving of the web of essays also encompasses traditional stories and power of words around the interior and exterior landscape. Without landscape, they mean nothing. This very idea of land culture in Silko's writing binds her culture with nature. There is no moment when her characters forget their relation to the land.

By collecting information on rocks, rain and many other natural elements, Silko has imagined her essays and stories as perfect pieces of nature writing. Through her own experiences and observations she has established her Native American tradition as an ideal community that considers nature to be the source of everything and values all living and non-living entities equally. She strongly opposes whites' anthropocentric world view of looking at human as emperor of all other entities of the world and expects all humans to respect nature not only in terms of its utility purpose but in terms of its reciprocal relationship with the world.

It is the modern environmental crisis which has mainly attracted Silko to focus upon her culture which fully values nature in terms of her holiness. The main threat to her culture is excessive white impact. In order to cope with modern techno centric worldview, bioregional learning to live in place has become the most important issue at this time. Therefore, most of the recent collections of nature writings are replete with references to Native American culture and philosophy. Silko's texts depict these culture tied to the land, fixed perfectly into the nature which not only observes but also awakens responsibilities to the nature and consequently to each other.

Summing up, as nature is our home, it is beauty, originality and something that is original is pure knowledge. Because the native people connect their stories with certain locations, they, the land, and the stores are inseparable. The common theme Silko shares is that, opposing the destructive tendencies of modern self-centered culture with a Pueblo based philosophy of worldliness can be helpful for the positive changes in the natural world because, there is nothing good or bad in this world. All things as they were created, exist in harmony with one-another as long as we do not disturb them.

## Conclusion

Nature is the common home for all living and non-living beings. As a common home, it combines everything in its lap. The earth is a part of it and the earth is home for all creatures. This nature contains us all in the cycle of growth, maturity, and decay. But attitudes towards nature vary, and some of the variations are culturally determined. The culture and religion of people's surrounding play a significant role in shaping their relationship with nature. This relationship can differ with different religions. Every religion has creation stories. Some of them regard nature as something separate from people, and some regard nature as integral part of human culture.

In Western culture, humans occupy superior position to nature. It is because their religious book, *The Holy Bible*, itself suggests humans to subdue nature and its elements. This is the reason that in their culture, they value things in terms of its utility purpose. In many contexts, the western culture is thought to be responsible for the degradation of nature. That is why scholars have started rethinking upon the statement of the *Bible*.

However, eastern cultures like Hinduism and Buddhism accord so much significance to nature. Their religion maintains all creatures of nature in an equal position. Humans are believed to be small part of the vast nature. In Hindu culture, natural elements like water, fire, wind, earth and so on occupy an especial place. Not only this, the creators of the world, the gods worship nature for her kindness. In this culture, each and every feast is made for the worshipping of nature. Separate hymns are made for separate natural gods that we see in *The Veda* and karma yoga for all creatures is fixed in their holy book, *The Bhagvad Gita*. In the same manner, Buddhist culture is governed by their philosophy of love and peace for all living and

non living entities. It is possible only when humans sacrifice greed and run for the welfare of others.

In terms of literature, every literary writing emerge from the experience of the world and its activities. Even if western thought is guided from anthropological conception, scholars are always conscious of the ongoing ecological degradation because of humans' irresponsible activities. Since the start of literary writing, all the environmental writers were also engaged for the same goal of changing the historical routes of anthropocentric human culture. All of them regarded the earth as a dwelling place for an interdependent community of living things.

Most importantly, Romanticists glorified the majesty of nature in Europe. They got solace in nature and depicted nature as a living reality. Similarly, Transcendentalists continued it in America, especially, opposing the human attitude of dependence on artificial machines produced along with technological development stressing upon the peaceful pure life of rustic dwellers. Such gradual progression in the writing of environmental literatures stressed upon a proper way of understanding nature. It not only systematized the knowledge but also helped us understand both positive and negative occurrences of any action bringing forth the fact that excess avoidance of environment is gradually alienating us from nature.

Nowadays, the expressions shared in such literary writings, are observed and analyzed from ecocritical eye. As a newly introduced genre of literature, Ecocriticism includes all branch of knowledge into its categorical framework and shares the idea that no philosophical writing can be understood isolating it from the concept of earth. Ecocritics observe how nature is expressed in different culture. In it, pastoral settings and rustic dwellings become the focal point of their research.

While talking about Silko's texts, her eco-awareness can never be isolated from her literary writings. The surroundings that she has shared since her childhood, act as a source of her nature writing. In her texts, we find this concept revolving around her concentration on interrelatedness and interdependence. It is her eco awareness that she values Native American culture in terms of its attitude of worshipping nature for her kindness either through feasts or through creation stories. Her writings appear as a best example of culture to be emanated from nature.

It is not new to argue that nature plays an important role in Silko's writings as she finds it a common point where she can relate to the land. What she does in one particular story, she says, is to get the interior landscapes of the characters. The characters and events in her texts are most importantly her ritual feasts and creation myths from which she depicts Native American's awareness of nature as a source of their culture which have always appeared ahead to advocate for biocentric perspective of the world

Representing Native American culture, Silko advocates for biocentric perspective of the world which is totally dependent upon the nature herself. Silko reflects upon how Laguna Pueblo are capable of seeing nature and how they create harmonious relationship with nature. She puts her community in part of restoring the harmony between their rituals and nature as well as nature and human society. In their feasts, rituals and stories, each and every activity is acted out from the influence of natural phenomena. They value even living and non living entities equally and secure special place for them because even after death, everyone and everything assimilates within the same mother earth from where they were emanated and in which they will continue to exist.



Silko suggests that oppression of nature goes hand in hand with oppression according to race, gender, or class. Despite its similarities with other American Indian literature, Silko's writings are unique in that it grounds upon Laguna Pueblo myth and lore and thus has significance separate from western tradition because obligation of being human is to see the human connection to nature and to speak it is to tell the earth's story. The connections between nature, language, and human responsibility underlie Silko's philosophy of nature as a whole. Everything resides in nature and therefore everything is connected to everything else.

In such technologically dominated world, indigenous people like Native Americans have been fighting for the conservation of their originality with the conception that nature not only has physical ties with human beings but it also has aesthetic and spiritual connection. They have social structures and beliefs that support proper use of resources even though these beliefs are expressed in terms of kinship or deities rather than ecology. Their green writing has become a legacy to our own troubled moment in the history of the earth. Therefore, contemporary people like us need to seek a proper way of dwelling on earth which can become a pathway for a better future either through literary writings or acting for the preservation of environment. Otherwise, we will destroy ourselves.

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