

**AN ECOCRITICAL STUDY OF GITA MEHTA'S *A RIVER SUTRA* AND
ARUNDHATI ROY'S *THE GOD OF SMALL THINGS***

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By

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CERTIFICATE

I declare that the dissertation entitled “AN ECOCRITICAL STUDY OF GITA MEHTA’S *A RIVER SUTRA* AND ARUNDHATI ROY’S *THE GOD OF SMALL THINGS*” has been prepared by me under the guidance of Dr. Zameerpal Kaur, Assistant Professor, Centre for Comparative Literature, School of Language, Literature and Culture, Central University of Punjab. No part of this dissertation has formed the basis for the award of any degree or fellowship previously.

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ABSTRACT

An Ecocritical Study of Gita Mehta's *A River Sutra* and Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*

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Ecocriticism is one of the most recently emerged interdisciplinary field of literary criticism. It refers to a study of literary texts involving the physical environment. The novels, *A River Sutra* By Gita Mehta and *The God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy, selected for this study, focus on the depiction of landscape, rivers, non human world etc. This study analyses the role of physical environment in the plot construction of both the novels. The novels deal with beautiful depiction of landscape. *A River Sutra* deals with Indian culture and mythology. Likewise, *The God of Small Things* deals with the themes of love, morality, fear and environmental destruction. The study discusses the functions of ecocriticism to trace the interconnectedness of all beings. Both the writers have focused on the impact of biosphere on the characters in their novels. The study reveals that the writers have indeed given primary importance to the place or bioregion in their novels. This study focuses on the burning issue of environmental degradation- a severe threat to human being as well the entire ecosystem, as depicted in the novels.

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CHAPTER 1

Ecological Criticism: An Overview

Nature has created convenient consumption structure for every species on the earth. But a human being who considers himself superior to everything consumes and exploits the whole structure: animals, birds, rivers and other natural resources for the fulfillment of own desires. This ambition has made human life advanced and enriched. On the other hand, it also has some drawbacks which monstrously stand before us. Preservation of nature on the planet (earth) is an essential part of development. Development in absence of proper protection of the environment leads to damage or crisis which is very harmful for every living creature. This situation worsens when the system becomes imbalanced and chaos in organising things becomes the cause of losing control over things. It is a common phenomenon which applies everywhere. Environmental degradation is the crucial problem of today's world. Consequently, it is affecting the life of human and non human world on the earth.

Man, animal and plants all belong to the mother earth. Man, a part of the ecosystem of the earth, relies upon other species for his survival. The human evolution has undergone a long process in which the "ecological balance played a decisive role" (Hughes 20). The word ecology has originated from the Greek roots. "Oikos" means home, which expands to the whole inhabited earth. The word "logo" stands for reason or study. Donald Hughes says:

Human ecology, then, is a rational study of how mankind interrelates with the home of the human species, the earth; with its soil and mineral resources; with its water, both fresh and salt; with its air, climates and weather, with its many living things, animal and plants, from the simplest to the most complex; and with the energy received ultimately from the sun. (3)

The word ecology is coined by the nineteenth century German biologist Ernst Haeckel who called ecology as "the domestic side of organic life" (Bala 209). Ecology is a vast and encyclopedic subject. It studies the life habits of over a million different kinds of animals and plants and their interaction with each other. It

can also be defined as the study of eco-system or the interrelations of the biotic communities with their non-living environment. These biotic communities and non-living environment are interdependent. If there were no life on earth, its environment would have been different. Conversely, if the environment had not changed, the earth would have been devoid of many animals and plant species which inhabit it now. So, ecology is a thread which integrates the knowledge about man and his environment from different perspectives.

Although ecology is the branch of science, but its wisdom is universal. Paul Shepard arguably states that ecological wisdom can be approached “Mathematically, Chemically, or it can be danced or told as myth” (4-5). In this statement Paul accepts the universality of the subject ecology by relating it not merely to science but with other subjects of knowledge. Further he reflects the ecological view in “widely scattered economically different culture.” As he states:

It is manifest, for example, among pre-classical Greeks, in Navajo religion and social orientation, in Romantic poetry of the 18th century and 19th century, in Chinese landscape painting of the 11th century, in current white headian philosophy, in Zen Buddhism, in the world view of the cult of the Cretan Great Mother, in the ceremonials of Bushaman hunters and in the medieval Christian metaphysics of light. (4-5)

Ecology has been a very remarkable feature of ancient literature. It has been traced in many ancient literary scriptures. Indian philosophy believes in the total integrity of all creations in the universe. Chandogya Upanishad mantra says “whether it be the tiger or the lion, the wolf or the bug, everything originates from it” (qtd. in Prasad 10). In the same way *The Guru Garanth Sahib* enunciates that god is the creator (*Karta*), Sole Cause (*Karn Karan*). The Holy Scripture says that this universe is the creation of god, and has also arranged everything in a systematic way. It also says that all living and non-living beings are interconnected to each other. None of them exists in separation from others in the entire cosmos. Exemplifying this relationship, it enunciates that as the detachment of bubbles and foam can't float alone from sea waves, similarly nothing can be separated from god (Nature):

Sutu eku mani sahasa jaise uti poti prabha moi.

Jla taranga aru phena budabuda jala te bhina na hoi.

Ihu parapanchu parabrahama ki lila bicharat aana na hoi. (qtd in Bala 212)

(God is everything, without god, there is nothing at all. As one thread holds hundreds and thousands of beads, he is woven in his creation. The waves of the water, the foam and bubbles are not distinct from the water).

The thought has ecological scientific relevance in the present time. Centuries ago, nature had a very respective space in the societies. It was never treated as a utility object as it has been today. *Atharva Veda* respectfully considered the earth as mother:

O mother earth! Born of you and living on you, we all creatures--- human beings, birds and animals are being nourished by your water, air and the sun energy (qtd. in Prasad 7)

In Vedic literature earth, water, air, fire and sky were adored as supreme power of this universe. All these components were worshiped as gods and goddesses. In *Japuji Sahib*, air is worshiped as guru, water as father and earth as the great mother, all these ingredients nourish all the living beings:

Pavana guru pani pita mata dharati mahatu. (qtd. in Bala 216)

(Air is Guru, Water is Father and Earth is the great mother of all).

Further the earth is adorned as Dharamshal, the place where man comes to practice righteousness:

Tis vich dharati thapi rakhi dharamsala. (qtd. in Bala 216)

(He established the Earth as a home for Dharma).

Many other ancient Indian scriptures like *the Vedas*, *the Mahabharatha* and *Ramayana* emphasise on the importance of Ahimsa or non violence. Ahimsa is the basic component of many Indian religions. The *Rig Veda* says "Protect both our species, two legged and four legged. Both food and water for their needs supply.

May they with us increase in stature and strength. Save us from hurt all our days, o powers!" (qtd. in Subramuniswamin 204). In ancient time Rishis worshipped water, fire, trees, and herbs. They believed that all these ingredients belong to the god and god exists in everything. Since the ancient times nature has been the centre point of life system on the earth. Nature has been considered as the strongest power than man or any other living being. Today there is too much emphasis on the preservation of ecological world. Various slogans and legislations are trying to restore the balance between nature and human world. This can be said to be reciprocal as nature too is the recipient of man's actions. Our irresponsible actions cause irreparable damages to nature. Ecocriticism invites both man and other creatures to live together in one big tent in complete harmony. In our religious texts there are examples to suggest how various creatures living on earth, in water and in sky used to share each other's peace. The ancient invocation for peace and balance in the ecological and human world asserts that there cannot be peace in the human world unless there is peace in nature. Human being is creating chaos shamelessly in ecology and craves for peace in our world. All these ancient texts show and prove that nature has been a vibrant concern of discussion. Hence, the term ecocriticism or ecological literature seems to be a positive extension and expansion of what has already been written in the ancient texts. All these accept the view that there is oneness with nature and man must develop attitude of love and respect for the whole of ecological world.

Literature has witnessed several phenomena occurring such as revolutions, wars, establishment of empires, etc. Literature always deals with the happenings in the world. However, literature seems dormant to reflect environmental issues. Increasing threat to environment has compelled to think about it to find proper solution to save the earth. Expansion in the area of knowledge, literature is also sharing knowledge to help the world from the problem of environment destruction.

Acceleration in the progress of science and technology has attributed to the imbalance of the eco-system. Depletion of ozone layer, pollution of atmosphere through emission of harmful gases, excessive use of natural resources, etc are the effective causes of environmental destabilisation. Human beings with their selfish nature exploit the natural resources. Today's world is witnessing the scarcity in

natural resources. Science is trying to ameliorate damages caused to environment and minimise the detrimental impact of human life on the environment. The challenging task before the human community today is to look for sustainable development without destroying the environment. It seems quite difficult to retrace the steps and return to a primordial life without machines and technology.

Environmentalists are convinced that human intellect has sufficient potentiality to find solution for any crisis, they also assert the urgent need for a reconsideration of our belief, attitude, and perception regarding natural world. A human being must set egalitarian perceptiveness to natural world, and try to establish more symbiotic relationship with his fellow beings. Ecological crisis is not a single hand solving problem, but it seeks support from all over the world. However, literature is adequately contributing to make people conscious of the environment and realising them for their exploitative attitude towards other living creatures. Literature has been always raising the contemporary problem of the societies. However, it is quite slow to react regarding the environmental issues. Buell says that “the belatedness and liminality of the recent environmental turn in literary-critical studies seems strange” (*Future 1*). Lawrence Buell comments on the belatedness of the literary turns towards environmental as strange and dormant. It is always an interesting phenomenon for creative art and critical theory to reflect how the material world is engaged, absorbed, and reshaped by theory, imagination, and *techne* (*Future 1*). He further says that environmental discourse is not a new term but it exists since the creation of this universe. Stories of the creation of the earth, its transformation by god or by humans have always been the central point of discussion. The ancient Christian scripture, *The Genesis*, has been always blamed for being the root cause of western “technodominantism” (*Future 2*). Others resisted this concept and called it a misreading of both history and biblical texts. Through these ancient examples Buell asserts that the environmental discourse has been existing within both individual thought traditions and worldwide. All this shows that environmental discourse is an emerging discourse with very ancient roots. Ecocriticism is brought as a movement of environment literary criticism which traces environmental depiction in a literary work.

The term ecocriticism, first time in the history of criticism, was used by William Rueckert in his essay "Literature and Ecology: an Experiment in Ecocriticism". In the essay William Rueckert states that ecocriticism is inevitably an "application of ecology and ecological concepts to study of literature" (107). Until the meeting of western Literature Association it remained silent in the field of literary criticism. But in 1990 Cheryll Glotfelty sowed the seeds of the new developing approach of criticism. In her anthological work *The Ecocriticism Reader* with Harold Fromm focused on the emergence of the term and its various aspects. Cheryll Glotfelty is recognised as the founder of Ecocriticism in the United States of America. Cheryll Glotfelty joined as the first American Professor of Literature and Environment at the University of Nevada, Reno. She chaired several conferences and presented a number of research papers. Her substantial influence on the ecological nature writing swings the American Studies and her networking activities touched a large number of other people as well. She asserts that in our postmodern age the profession of English literature must "redraw the boundary" to "remap" the rapidly changing contour of literature. Further she points out that the global environment crisis is explicitly ignored by the scholars. Until the establishment of the ASLE (Association for the Study of Literature and Environment) there has been no sign that the institution of literary studies has even been aware of environmental crisis. According to Cheryll, English profession has failed to respond in any significant way to the issue of environment. In her famous essay "Introduction: Literary Study in an Age of Environment Crisis", she has defined ecocriticism as the study of relationship with literature and environment, likewise the relationship of literature with other subjects of social science and science. She wrote that ecocriticism is

...the study of relationship between literature and physical environment. Just as feminist criticism examines language and literature from gender-conscious perspective, and Marxist criticism brings an awareness of modes of production and economic class to its reading of texts, ecocriticism takes an earth centred approach to literary study. (17)

Cheryll Glotfelty emphasises on its adaptation in the vast field of literary criticism to analyse literary texts from a new perspective of ecocriticism. Lawrence

Buell in his work *The Environment Imagination*, published in the same year that Glotfelty's collection published, defines "ecocriticism as the study of relationship between literature and the environment conducted in a spirit of commitment to environment praxis" (20). Laurence Buell shares his experience of American pastoral in the context of social, political, gender-based, aesthetic, pragmatic, and environmental. Buell is mainly concerned with the emergent threats of ecological holocaust, and examines environmental crisis as tending to increase the importance of pastoralism as a literary and cultural force in the future. Buell accepts the uncertainty in the term but he says:

If one thinks of it... as a multiform inquiry extending to a variety of environmentally focused perspective more expressive of concern to explore environmental issues searchingly than of fixed dogmas about political solution, then the neologism becomes a useful omnibus term for subsuming a large and growing scholarly field. (20)

William Rueckert in his essay forges a link between biological and literary activities. He suggests that poems accumulate energy from their communities in the same way plants do, this energy can be useful for the outside world. Further he discovers it problematic "in figuring out how to turn the stored energy of literature into effective political action in the real world" (Estok). Richard Kerridge defines ecocriticism as a "literary and cultural criticism from an environment viewpoint" (530). Exploring the practicality of the term he asserts that literary "texts are evaluated in terms of their environmentally harmful and helpful effects" (530).

Micheal P. Branch and Scott Slovic in their introduction to *ISLE Reader* define ecocriticism as a term "now widely used to describe scholarship that is concerned with the environmental implications of literary texts..." (Branch). Thomas K. Dean includes culture in the study of ecocriticism, he says that "ecocriticism is a study of culture and cultural products (art works, writings, scientific theories etc.) that is in the same way connected with the human relationship to the natural world" (Dean). Further he calls it a response to "the need for the humanistic understanding of our relationship with the natural world in an age of environmental destruction" (Dean). From these several definitions it is clear that ecocriticism has some separate dimensions to examine literature and

the mutual relationship of literature and environment on the single platform of ecocriticism as in the form of literary criticism. Being a newly emerging field, different thinkers and critics have approached it in different ways to set its paradigm in literary theories. However, their fundamental concern has remained similar, these various approaches generally emphasise on the relationship between man and earth. The ecocritics seek the possible solution for the correction of the contemporary environmental situation.

Although ecocriticism has several interpretive definitions to look into literary works from environmental perspective, there is no universally accepted definition that is available to examine the literature from environmental perspective. Literary ecology has very wide concept. It talks about everything that is directly linked to the earth such as water, sky, land, human, and all non human world. It also includes ancient buildings, traditional houses, agricultural lands, flora and fauna, caves, hills, plants etc. In a literary work all these things create beautiful scenery to make it adorable and make us feel great affection because of their attractive nature. Besides the appreciation of natural beauty, ecocriticism is welcomed as a movement of environment protection. Greg Garrard explores the concept of pollution, wildness, apocalypses, dwelling, animal and earth in his renowned book *Ecocriticism*. He asserts:

...indeed the widest definition of the subject of ecocriticism is the study of the relationship of the human and non human throughout human culture history and entailing critical analysis of the term 'human itself'. (5)

Increasing threat to ecosphere has made the theory important to hold its position in literary criticism. The perception of the term is deeply connected with ecological problem. However, eco consciousness and deep concerns for ecology can be in our culture and civilization. The developing paradigm of civilisation grew aggressive and arrogant attitude towards nature. Man exploits all aspects of nature for his self elevation, self-glorification. He drills the earth for metal, destroys the trees for his habitat and for industry; he destroys the natural beauty of landscape with the setting up of industrial establishments, polluting land, water and air.

Richard Kerridge explicitly advocates the environmental aspects in the theories that ecocriticism always try to trace ideas concerning to environment and its projection in literary works. Moreover ecocriticism examines the texts and ideas in term of their “coherence and usefulness as responses to environmental crisis” (Prasad 3).

The association for the study of literature and environment helped in the emergence of the field of ecocriticism. The organization was established in 1992 at the first meeting of the US western association. Michael P. Branch says “since that meeting in 1989, the term Ecocriticism has bloomed in usage, so that now finds it appearing with some frequency in call for paper, critical articles, and indeed academic job description. Indications are that acceptance of the term is imminent” (Branch). In the beginning ecocritics adopted only American nature writing, British romantic writing to analyse ecocriticism in the literary works. In the beginning ecocriticism took its literary bearing from nineteenth century American writers whose work deals with nature, the life force, and the wilderness as manifested in America, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Margaret Fuller and Henry David Thoreau. All the three writers are known as Transcendentalists. Emerson in his book *Nature* describes the impact of the natural world upon him often spoken in words of powerful dramatic voice:

Crossing a bare common, in snow puddles, at twilight, under a clouded sky, without having in my thoughts any occurrence of special good fortune, I have enjoyed a perfect exhilaration. I am glad to the brink of fear. (38)

In this work he discusses the mystical unity of nature and exhorts to his readers to appreciate a relationship with the environment. In the Book *Summer on the lake* Fuller narrates her encounter with the American landscape. She describes her enjoyable moments as:

For here there is no escape from the weight of a perpetual cration; all other forms and motion come and go, tide rises and recedes, the wind, at its mightiest, moves in gales and gust, but here is really an incessant , an indefatigable motion. Awake or asleep, there is no escape, still this rushing round you and through you. It is in this way I

have most felt the grandeur- somewhat eternal, if not infinite. (qtd. in Barry 241)

Walden Thoreau accounts his personal experience of his two year stay in a hut he had built on the shore of Waldon Pond. The book makes a circle of resistance to modern society and seeking to renew the self by return to nature. These three books fall in the category of foundational works of American “ecocentered” Writing. Gradually ecocritics move to the literary works which include nature as the main theme and show the effects on plot construction.

In 1991, in England, Jonathan Bate took the credit to use the term ecological criticism in his book *Romantic Ecology*. In his work Bate describes the beginning of ecocriticism, especially in Britain. Ecocriticism or Green Studies in the United Kingdom begins with deep rootedness in the British Romanticism of the 1790’s. Jonathan Bate’s *Romantic Ecology: Wordsworth and the Environmental Tradition* is the foundation work of this new field in Britain. The book keenly examines the works of William Wordsworth from ecocentric perspective. Bate argues that in Wordsworth’s works nature seems to dominate over the entire world. He further argues that Wordsworth’s works rejects the industrialization and “ideology of political economy” (9). The study on ecocriticism in the United Kingdom is comparatively less developed than in the United States of America. In Britian the study is introduced in schools of higher education. There are few institutions which offer the study. Laurence Coupe in his book *The Green Studies Reader: From Romanticism to Ecocriticism* traces the roots of ecocriticism from romanticism in United Kingdom. Romantic critics are concerned about the romantic writer’s view and respond to the history of ecological science and environmental ethics. This intellectual movement is given the name of “Green Studies”. The term “Green Studies” is used by the British writers while the American writers use the term “ecocriticism”.

Ecocriticism is a recently developed literary theory in the field of literary criticism. In simple words ecocriticism is an environmental approach to literary texts and evaluate them from environment perspective. Literary texts are looked upon from ecoconscious eyes of the critics and they seek the environmental consciousness of writers in a work of art. Most environmental conscious literary

texts deal with a common concern that is the problem of environmental degradation caused by several human activities. Man has crossed the age of environmental limits consequently damaging the planet's ecological (basic life cycle) system. Several efforts to restore environment is the basic moral duty of a human being so that upcoming disasters can be avoided. It is also necessary to identify the role to protect environment.

Ecocriticism expands its critical approaches which differ from other literary theories. Most literary theories evaluate the relationship between writers, texts, and the world. All the other theories considered the world as only society or the social sphere. But ecocriticism takes it in the entire context of ecosphere which includes all human and non human worlds. According to Barry Commoners "everything is connected to everything else" (qtd. in Glotfelty 19). In the light of this statement Cherly Glotfelty says, "we must conclude that literature does not float above the material world in some aesthetic ether, but, rather, plays a part in an immensely complex global system, in which energy, matter, and ideas interact" (19).

Augmenting attention to natural writing has been seen after the emergence of the problem of environmental destruction. Love writes "teaching and studying literature without reference to the natural conditions of the world and the basic ecological principle that underlie all life seems increasingly shortsighted, incongruous" (16). In the beginning ecocriticism worked in a very restrictive way. Nature oriented writing was considered as the environmental genre. But with the pace of time it started forging its paths in several other approaches and subjects. Environmental literature, nature writing, deep ecology, Ecofeminism, bioregionalism etc are interlinked terms.

The theory shows the connection with ecological activism, society, and social theory. It also focuses on the rhetoric of cultural texts and material practices that are related to the environment. Ecocriticism seeks to extend awareness about environment and links itself with other ecological sciences and approaches. Ecocriticism is both literary and cultural criticism from an environmentalist perspective. Literary and cultural texts are interpreted in terms of their environmentally harmful or helpful effects. Ecocritics evaluate the concept of

nature to understand the cultural development that has placed the world on the edge of environmental crisis. Nature and literature always share a common ground of the relationship. Poets and writers are always keen to appreciate natural beauty through their genius creativity. In present scenario this relationship between nature and social world is being analysed and emphasised in all departments of knowledge. The literary critics, therefore, seek to show this close relationship between nature and society and it has been textualised by the writers in their works.

Ecocriticism is not confined to a single approach but it bears a range of approaches to literature. This diversity is the main feature of the theory which gives it strength. The wide range of critical approaches within ecocriticism reflects the multiple fields within ecology itself. The diversity of approach does not lead to competition among ecocritics but centralise ecology concerns within literary texts. Few critics tried to focus on the single approach to provide the ecocritical movement with an apparent legitimacy in the academy. For instance, Naess, the initiative of deep ecology, dealt with a range of ecological philosophy of “ecosophies” to raise the environmental problems in the contemporary world (Sarver). Lawrence Buell arguably asserts that ecocriticism “takes its energy not from a central methodologies paradigm of inquiry but from pluriform commitment to the urgency of rehabilitating that which has been effectively marginalised by mainstream societal assumption” (Arnold 1090). These wide range of ecocriticism practices focus on the “nature inherent in human and in settings in which human figure prominently: in dooryards, in cities, and in farms” rather than pay attention merely just on trees and rivers that inhabit texts (Sarver).

Catrin Gersdorf and Sylvia Mayer mention some directions for the better understanding of ecocriticism as an emerging paradigm within literary studies:

1. Ecocriticism is a content oriented form of literary theory in which literary and non literary texts are evaluated from criteria such as their attention to natural phenomena, their environmental awareness, their recognition of diversity, their attitude to non human forms of life, and their awareness of ecological issue. Hence, literature is considered as an important medium to

bring alteration in consciousness and increase ecological sensibility which helps to change of political and social practice.

2. An Ecocritical study can move in a cultural anthropology direction too by exploring the alienation of human beings who have erased their roots with natural and social life.
3. In the third direction ecocriticism moves to ethical direction. It revises the anthropocentric cultural value system. It concentrates on “contact”, “cooperation” and “co- evolution” as main features of ecosystem. It believes in the concept of new planetary ecological ethic in which it examines the web of relationship of all living beings.
4. With the development of the concept, ecocriticism shifts its critical approaches from causal, linear to complex, nonlinear of knowledge. It forges its connections with complex forms of thinking as physics, cybernetics and systems theory.
5. In the final dimension, there is the aesthetic and imaginative dimension which is concerned with an ecologically refined model of humanity and human culture.

Environmentalism

Environmentalism is a term to describe awareness regarding environmental crisis such as global warming and pollution. Greg Garrard defines it as:

The very broad range of people who are concerned about environment issues such as global warming and pollution, but who wish to maintain or improve their standard of living as conventionally defined, and who would not welcome radical social change, will be describe hereinafter as ‘environmentalism’. (21)

Environmentalism has a conventional approach of living in which they deny to follow the modern way of life. Environmentalists think that the modern way of living is the cause of environmental deterioration. They value the rural way of life. Environmentalism began in the second half of the twentieth century. It emerged in response to the environmental hazards that has reached at the edge of destruction. The movement has sought its roots from traditional enthusiasm for

wild life, but is distinct from those traditions. The growing environmental treats are not only affecting wildlife but human health, food and shelter. Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* is credited with the initiative task of the movement, and the first rallying of environmentalism as a public movement. It studies the toxic effects of residues of industrial and agricultural chemicals in animal and human bodies.

Industrial pollution, exploitation of natural resources, deforestation, and accelerating rate of extinction of species etc. are the main threats to the world. These threats are the output of industry and the applications of industrial methods to traditional harvest and husbandry. Environmentalism criticises the industrial modernity, and "a distinctive modern movement in which an indispensable role is played by science: by the method and technology" (Kerridge 533).

Environmentalism has become a central point of discussion among scholars in the second half of twentieth century. Environmentalism feels threat not only to wildlife but also to human beings. In 1962 Rachel Carsons's *Silent Spring* discusses the toxic effects of industrialization and agricultural chemicals like DDT on animal and human beings. She favoured the ban of pesticide DDT for agricultural use in 1972 in America. With acute documentation of the affects of pesticides and pollution of the environment on wildlife and humans, Carsons criticised the chemical industry for spreading poison in the environment. She accused the government for the acceptance of such destructive things to promote agricultural production. The book took inspiration from John Keat's famous poem "La Belle Dame Sans Merci", which Keats says "the sedge is wither'd from the lake, and no birds sing". Throughout her work Carson evokes the awareness against uncontrolled pollution and examines the use of pesticides that is directly harming and killing not only birds, and animals but humans also.

Excessive consumption of natural resources and industrial pollution are creating threat to the present world. Val Plumwood, environmentalist philosopher, writes in his work *Environmental Culture*:

Massive process of biospheric degradation and the failure and permanent endangerment of many of the world's oldest and greatest fisheries, the continuing destruction of its tropical forests and the loss

of much of its agricultural land and up to half its species within the next thirty years. (22)

Deep Ecology

Deep Ecology was founded by Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess in his paper titled "The Shallow and The Deep Long Range Ecology Movement". Deep ecology is a new ecological paradigm that replaces the dominant mechanistic paradigm of the past three centuries. It focuses on the biocentrism, in which human being is considered as a part of entire ecosphere. It also rejects the human domination over other living creatures. Deep Ecologists argue that human being is not above the ecosphere, but a part of that sphere. The notion of deep ecology is a reaction against the notion of anthropocentrism. Modern people deal with nature in a very brutal way because they are supported by their cultural practices. Their culture perceives them separate and superior to other living creatures. On the other hand, deep ecology views an understanding of life in which thinking of the 'self' must entail other organism, and see all natural world as one's own. It supports the perception of killing another creature is an act of violence against oneself. Deep ecologists look for an ecologically sustainable way of life.

Carolyn Merchant, in his book *Radical Ecology*, focuses on the five principles of deep ecology. In the first principle human being is considered equal to other living creatures. It is a new metaphysics, it focuses on integrity of humans with non human nature. The notion of this principle perceives the fundamentals of science of ecology in which all the components have equal importance on the planet earth.

The second principle is a new psychology and philosophy of self. It emphasises on total intermingling of person with planet. It believes that individual egos give way to develop new spiritual freedom to form interconnected community.

Thirdly, deep ecology rejects the industrial society as the world paradigm for development and emphasises on leaving vast tracts of land as wilderness. People can live their lives as "future primitive" withdrawing from development land

and allowing it to reestablish itself as wilderness. It also comprises the study of horticulturalist and gatherer hunters to develop a new anthology.

Fourth, deep ecology asserts that people have duty to maintain the integrity of the ecosphere, not to conquer it or make it more efficient. It supports an ecocentric rather than homocentric ethic. It also entails that the humans should not exploit other organisms because humans are dependent on ecosphere for survival.

Fifth, it espouses a new ecological science that promotes a sense of human place within the household of nature. The new science follows the ancient shaman rather than genetic engineering. The new science is process oriented. It draws on design with nature, rather than imposition of form on nature. Biology and cultural diversity are desired ends. These can be reached and maintained through soft energy and appropriate technology paths. Technology is not an end but a means to human welfare.

Social Ecology and Eco-Marxism

Social ecology and eco- Marxism are political thoughts, they believe that scarcity in natural resources is created by capitalism. It is the result of manipulations of the production, capitalist power manipulate the dynamics of supply and demand. Social ecology and eco- Marxism do not take the position against anthropocentrism. They follow the system of domination or exploitation of human by other human. Social ecology and eco- Marxism focus on

interspecies relationship, they perpetuate, deep ecologists claim, the anthropocentrism that ought to be the target of any earth centred critique. At the same time, social ecologists and eco- Marxists lament the individual and pervasive mysticism of deep ecologists, which, they argues, represent a retreat from ration thought and real political engagement. (Garrard 31)

Both the terms originated in nineteenth century radical thoughts: the anarchism of Mikhail Bakunin (1814), and Pyotr Kropotkin (1842-1921), the communism of Karl Marx (1818-83) and Friedrich Engels (1820- 95). Social ecology and Eco- Marxism argue that ecological limits are a kind of mystification.

Anthropocentrism

Anthropocentrism is a perception that reflects human being as centre. The anthropocentric view sees natural world in relation to humans. They see natural world as resource for economic use, or as the practices of certain social or cultural values. The notion of anthropocentrism is contrasted with biocentrism. The ideology of anthropocentrism gives the privilege to human being for the use of other natural world to fulfill their needs. Generally, it considers human being as a superior species to all other species on the earth. In environmental discourse, anthropocentrism “names the view that human being and their interest are solely of value and always take priority over those of the non- human (Clark 3). Anthropocentrism hold the assumption that the natural world is primarily a resource for human being, and human being is the only creature to exploit it. In other words it places human being at the centre of everything. There are many religious assumptions that support the notion of anthropocentrism, for instance, the environmentalist historian Lynn White Jr. has looked Christianity as the most anthropocentric of religion, in Genesis 1:26, that “man should have dominion over the other creature of the earth” (Kerridge 537).

Ecofeminism

Ecofeminism is a political movement within environmentalism. Ecofeminism focuses on the convergence between women and nature. The ability of reproduction and nurturing associates women with nature. Women and nature are exploited by men. They are objectified and politically marginalised. Critics argue that the development of oppression occurred during enlightenment into “a Logic of domination, geared to hierarchical, dualistic thinking” (Pepper 106). According to the “logic”, men/ human are different from women/ nature, second, that they are superior to them, therefore they are justified in dominating them.

Since the late 1980s, the term ecofeminism has been used as growing political, cultural and intellectual movement in academic. Timothy Clark arguably links the destruction of environment with historical oppression of women. He argues that ecofeminist thinkers developed a controversy about difference between “sex (nature), gender (culture)”. It states “whether the category woman or women has any clear referent or is not, in fact, an unstable product of social

condition” (111). Further he calls it the most sophisticated and intellectual developed branch of environmental criticism. The dualistic binary opposition (man/ woman, culture/ nature) fit neatly over one another.

The term was first time used by French feminist Francoise D'Eaubonne. D'Eaubonne traced common values and goals between the feminist and environment movements. Vandana Shiva says:

Ecofeminism grew out of various social movements- the feminist, peace and the ecology movements- in the late 1970s and early 880s. Though the term was first used by Francoise d'Eaubonne, it became popular only in the context of numerous protests and activities against environmental destruction, sparked off initially by recurring ecological disasters. (13)

Ecofeminism is aimed to break the hierarchies and domination. Ecofeminism also deals with many of the same premises and principles as deep ecology. Both the terms have common in their concepts, ecofeminism argues that “everything in nature has intrinsic value” and that “our anthropocentricism viewpoint, instrumentalist value, and mechanistic models should be rejected for a more biocentric view that can comprehend the interconnectedness of all life processes” (Birkeland 20). Moreover, ecofeminism views nature as an interconnected web rather than separate phenomena on the basis of hierarchy. It also argues that hierarchies are the creation of human mind, and they implemented it onto nature, and then used to justify social domination. Human domination over nature and men’s domination over women share a common logic of domination or “master Model” (Garrard 26). It perceives women as associated with nature, the material, the emotion, and men with culture, the non material, the rational, and the abstract.

The main thematic concern of the present research work is to discuss the ecological perspectives in the fictions of Gita Mehta and Arundhati Roy. For a proper appraisal, I have selected two distinctive and fascinating novels *A River Sutra* by Gita Mehta and *The God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy to analyse from ecocritical perspective. Both these writers emphasise on the relationship between human and non human and have brought before us the need for each

other. Nature has often shown its power by controlling manpower through natural calamities like famine, drought, tides etc. These novels bring out the inhumanity of the human world whose actions ruin the non-human world. These novels also question and confront our most popular assumptions about nature and nature writing by inviting us to take a hard look at the contested terrains where increasing numbers of poor and marginalised people are organising around interrelated social and environment problems. The above novels are at par excellence to be read through the lens of ecocriticism.

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CHAPTER 2

Gita Mehta and Arundhati Roy: A Comparative Analysis

In Indian English Literature, fiction is the most developed genre in the postmodern period. In early nineteen sixties and seventies fictions of R. K. Narayan, Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand, Arun Joshi, Anita Desai have got prestigious recognition both in India and abroad. But Indian English novel has not got such recognition from readers in our country and abroad, the way it has got in the postmodern period. As Bijay Kumar says:

If Indian English poetry flourish in the mid- seventies, thanks to R. Parthasathy, who popularized it by publishing a number of Indian English poets and his most significant anthology titles, ten twentieth century Indian poets, Indian English novel had its luxuriant growth in the hands of Amitav Ghosh, Upamanyu Chatterjee, Shashi Tharoor, Vikram Seth, Shashi Deshpande, and few other in the nineteen eighties and after. (55)

Postmodern Indian English novels deal with its broadening of the thematic range. This new era in Indian English writing has brought a shift in its emphasis. It has moved away from the Gandhian era of village centrism to the city centrism of post independent India. Bijay Kumar rightly opines:

The 'locale' has shift from the village to the metropolis of our country and then abroad. East- West encounter which is explained in terms of hybridity in relationship by post- colonial critics, take 'a space' in postmodern Indian English fiction. When the world has become 'a global village,' no culture, no society is pure or insulate today. (56)

This new shift in traditional writing introduced characters, situations both from inside the country and abroad and developed them. In the post era of 1980s Indian English fiction writings deal with themes of love, sex, marriage or the failure of it. The theme of love and sex is very bold and unconventional. In addition to that, decline of morality and lack of faith in religion are predominant themes of postmodern Indian English fictions. Indian English writing has received remarkable position in the production of art by mixing up tradition and modernity. Earlier

novels have projected India's heritage, tradition, culture past and moral values. Indian English novel came to full blossoming in post independence India.

Fiction writing has reached the pinnacle of its glory with writings of established women writers of fiction like Kamala Markandaya, Ruth Praver Jhabvala, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande, Arundhati Roy, Kiran Desai, etc. Gita Mehta and Arundhati Roy's literary works have acquired a prestigious place in the history of Indian English literature. Both Arundhati Roy and Gita Mehta have occupied a distinguished place among the Indian English writers.

Gita Mehta was born in Delhi in a renowned Oriya family in 1943 pre-independent India. Her father, Biju Patnaik, was a freedom fighter, and elected as chief minister of Odisha after independence. She completed her education in India and United Kingdom. Gita Mehta married to Sonny Mehta, head of the Alfred A. Knopf Publishing house. She had profound impact of publishing house to encourage her towards writing. Her books have made important space in the lists of bestseller books in Europe, The U. S., and India. Endowed with unexhaustively energies, she is actively associated with Indian literature and culture. She understands it thoroughly and makes a convincing portrayal. A writer's views and attitude which conditions his work are consequences of numbers of influences, same is in the case of Gita Mehta. Her writing primarily focused on Indian culture, history, and western perception of it. She gained profound understanding of Indian culture and prevailing western perception of its through her journalistic and political background.

Gita Mehta started her literary career in America but she never lost her insight to mention Indian society and culture to familiar her western reader. Despite of being a diasporic writer, she has secured a prestigious place among the Indian women writers such as Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande, Arundhati Roy, etc. She started her career as T.V. Journalist. Showing her impression of Indian's mysticism she published her first collection of essays *Karma Cola: Marketing the Mystic East* in 1979. In 1989, she published her first novel *Raj* which is based on the story of a young girl born into Indian nobility under British raj. The novel deals with history and fiction on the same ground. In 1993, her most famous novel *A River Sutra* came out. The novel has

enabled her “to become a writer lionised by the world who has created a new language of literature and recreated India for India” (Chaturvedi 22). The novel *A River Sutra* is her most successful novel. Later on she published another collection of essays *Snakes and Ladders* in 1997. It gives an account of India since independence. *Snakes and Ladders* has become her most widely read work.

Arundhati Roy born in 1961 in Shillong, Meghalaya to a Syrian Christian mother, Mary Roy, and a Bengali Hindu father. Her mother was social activist and struggled for women’s right. Her father was a professional tea planter. Her entire childhood spent in her mother’s native village, Ayemenem in Kerala. Arundhati Roy got her primary education at home by her mother and at the age of 10, she went to school for regular classes. She was influenced by her mother’s active participation in struggle for women’s rights movement in Kerala. Her mother, Mary Roy, succeed to bring the right of inheritance for Christian women in Kerala. So, Arundhati followed her mother’s credence to become a social activist and environmentalist. Arundhati Roy through her writings occluded several misperceptions in the Indian society. Although after spending her teenage years at school in Kerala, she took admission at The School of Planning and Architecture in Delhi. She completed bachelor degree, and joined college to support herself, while teaching of aerobics she attracted towards literary writing.

After the success of her first novel Roy moved to political writing. She published her first nonfiction book *The End of Imagination* (1998), and later on *The Cost of Living* (1999), *The Greater Common Good* (1999), *Power Politics* (2001),. Later on she published a number of other essays and articles as “The Algebra of infinite justice” (2002), “War Talk” (2003), “The Checkbook and Cruise Missile” (2004). In her most of works she criticized several government policies. On the Sardar Sarovar Dam she condemned government for illegally migration of thousands of natives of the land. Government strongly reacted against her revolt and put her in jail for 12 hours. Roy’s identity as a literary writer seems to be dominated by political activities. In an interview with David Barsamian in 2001, she commented that though *The God of Small Things* is her only fictional work, but further she accepted that she doesn’t see “a great difference between the novel and her non fictional works. Roy says that “fiction is truth... I think fiction is the truest thing there ever was. My whole effort now is to remove the distinction. The

writer is the midwife of understand” (Roy, “Interview with Roy”). Roy’s approach to understand literature is to make people see sense and encourage them for their rights. Using her writing as a tool, she wishes to educate her readers to stand for their rights. In her famous book *Power and Politics* she clearly gives an account of “the trouble is that once you’ve seen it, you can’t unsee it. And once you’ve seen it, keeping quiet, saying nothing, becomes as political an act as speaking out” (7).

Arundhati Roy was awarded the 1997 Booker Prize for her novel *The God of Small Things*. In January 2006, she got the Sahitya Academic Award for her work *The Algebra of Infinite Justice*, but she declined it. In 2004, she was awarded the Sydney Peace Prize for her work in social campaigns and her advocacy of non-violence. In 2003, she also received special recognition as a woman of peace at the Global Exchange Human Rights Award in San Francisco. In 2002, she won the Lannan foundation’s Cultural Freedom Award for her work.

Gita Mehta’s writing deals with cultural practice. Mehta satirises the hypocrisy of religious practices and beliefs. She presents paradoxes and contradictions in religious practices in India. As K. V. Surendran rightly opines about her perception of Indian life:

Gita Mehta describes India as a land of contradiction. A country which boasts of Ancient civilization, India has her own weaknesses. There is no dearth of hypocrisy and the rich exploit the poor. To show their vanity people never hesitates to spend even millions. What takes the back seat here is the concern for the toiling masses, who would continue to lead a miserable life when the rich becomes richer by hook or crook of course, the novel depicts only certain aspects of Indian life. (40-41)

She depicts Indian cultural practice in her works. Being a diasporic writer, her works with their fine incursions into both negotiate her position between two cultures. Writing is a means for Mehta is to articulate her role as the spokesperson of two diverse cultures and also her analyses is successful in finding the cultural identity. Gita Mehta explores an essential Indian sensibility in her works. She deals with the themes like culture value, music, art form, ethos, and myths. Her book *Karma Cola* published in 1979. It tells the story of an English aristocrat who hears

about a guru in the mountain. The guru is famous for his ability to turn urine into scented rose water. So, the English man search the guru and takes samples of his wear, which it turned out, smelt and tasted like urine. After three weeks she completed *Karma Cola: Marketing the Mystic East*. The collection of essays weaves Mehta's own impression of Indian's mysticism. The novel *A River Sutra* is Indian both in theme and treatment. Mehta uses the traditional Indian way of story-telling where episode follows episode. Gita Mehta deals with the Indian theme. Its theme is to put it simply with the sense of oneness with nature. It portrays the scene of the holy river Narmada, and described minutely with great realism. She tells its location, and lying myths behind it. The place is represented in realistic colours.

Arundhati's literary work she has followed distinctive theme to describe Indian society through her significant writing. In an interview she explained that her intention was "to make modern India accessible to western and to whole generation of India who have no idea what happened 25 years before we born" (Roy, "Interview with Roy"). Arundhati Roy deals with the themes like gender discrimination, untouchability, and illicit relationship. Arundhati Roy lashes out at the hypocritical moral code of society, which makes a great difference between men and women. Gender discrimination is one of the themes which ring the note of *The God of Small Things*. It is the truthful portrayal of the plight of the women in society and their struggle for seeking the sense of identity in a male dominated society. Arundhati Roy flings a harsh irony on the man's domination over women. She portrays the miserable condition of women through the character of Ammu who had to face anxiety, fret, and fever of life. Ammu has seen cruelty of her father, husband. Through the portrayal of women character Roy seems to say that a woman is not a mere toy or an object of pleasure or a means of gratifying the man's baser passion but the noble and richest part of man's life. *The God of Small Things* shows a very fine picture of dalit and the deserted in society. The characterisation of some of the untouchable characters in the novel depicts the casteism in Indian society. Roy satirises the upper caste rich people of society who insult and persecute the untouchables. The novel also deals with a revolutionary theme of illicit relation. The sexual relations between Ammu and Velutha shock conventional caste mentality of Indian society.

Both the novelists exhibit the female's condition in their works. In *A River Sutra* there are three stories in which women's miserable condition has been depicted. Gita Mehta shows that how the male dominated society thinks women as an object. In the novel *A River Sutra* Gita Mehta writes about the problems faced by the women, it also shows the decay of morality. Gita Mehta, in the three different stories, deals mainly with the domination of women. In these stories women has been shown as the victim of male dominated society. In the Courtesan's story, the courtesan women have less reputation in the society. They are considered regardless because of their profession. In the story Courtesan woman describes how she fails to protect her daughter from the growing indignity around her. Her Girl was abducted by a dangerous bandit Rahul, and keeps her with him for two years in a cave among coarse criminals. In musician story, the music teacher's daughter was betrayed because of her ugliness, the story reflects that male dominated society accepts only external beauty which shows its materialistic nature. In Minstrel's story, the eight year girl child was forcefully indulged into prostitution. She has to face customers and give them sexual pleasure.

On the other hand, Arundhati Roy comments on the decaying morality in Indian society in her novel *The God of Small Things*. In the novel she writes about the problem faced by Indian women in the period of social change. Roy's writing primarily base on her experience and observation which can't be challenged. *The God of Small Things* is a very realistic and sympathetic commentary upon the life of an unfortunate woman Ammu. She is crushed under the social and family value principle. Ammu's tragic end is a testimony to the inhuman approach towards women in the Indian society. The novel is a commentary on the life of Ammu as well countless women who fail to give proper shape to their life due to lack of sympathy, goodwill of their own gender especially and other pressure caused by loneliness.

Gita Mehta's language evolves a suitable style. The language of the novel is sutured with the translation of Indian idioms, Indian imaginary, and rural colours. Sometimes, there is literary translation from Sanskrit, and sometime there is breaking of the English syntax to convey emotional upheavals and agitation. Many words are imported from Indian language, and used as they are without any

translation. She frequently uses village proverbs, legends and concrete imagery in Indian context. Gita Mehta possessed a highest degree, the one essential gift of novelist is the power of creates living and concrete characters. However, the characters in the novel are not sharply distinctly individual. She did not try to over crowd his canvass. She believes in oneness of all, of God, man and man, and man with nature, and hence did not consider individual characterisation necessary. Her characters endowed with life and vitality, linger long in the memory. Their vitality arises from the novelist's close, firsthand knowledge of the life and character of the rural folk which she has portrayed. This makes the novel a veritable picture- gallery, crowed with living, breathing, and human being. The characters of her novel are seldom defined and would be called caricatures by the standard criteria of prose criticism. It seems that she is not much interested in individual characterisatio. She perceives all the characters as a part of one another and beyond and above that, part of God. She has suitably modified a borrowed art form to express Indian Sensibility. The character in her novel is made descriptive in a typical rural way. They live in close intimacy with nature, and are a part of it. For them nature is a living being, and even hills, rivers, fields and animals have a distinct presence, a personality of their own.

Like Gita Mehta's *A River Sutra*, Arundhati Roy wrote her novel predominately in English, requiring the reader to deduce the meaning of a number of words in her native language Malayalam. She freely uses many Malayalam words to support the cultural phenomenon in her novel. The use of Malayalam language is made essential by the nature of the language. Vipin Gopal asserts, "Malayalis have always welcomed other languages to coexist with their own and the interaction of these with Malayalam has helped its development in different respects" (Gopal). Though Malayalam is mainly of Sanskrit origin, English has the second largest influence on the language spoken by Indians in Kerala in the southern region of the country. By using both English and Malayalam Roy exemplifies what her native tongue has been doing for thousands of years: coexisting with other languages without losing its own influence (Gopal).

Roy does not comment on her language choice and leave it unexplained. She has not given any explanation for her stylistic choice either in a preface to the

novel of elsewhere. Though Roy does not comment on specific linguistic choices, she does assert that there is a method to her writing:

It was really like designing a building...the use of time, the repetition of words and ideas and feelings. It was really a search for coherence- design coherence- in the way that every last detail of a building- its doors and windows, its structural components- have, or at least ought to have, an aesthetic, stylistic integrity, a clear indication that they belong to each other, as must a book. (qtd. in Abraham)

The God of Small Things is an ingenious work of Indian English literature. The novel has been shaken the international literary society. It is considered as an extremely original and innovative which explores various aspects. Arundhati Roy's style of writing is quite complex and complicated. The structure of the novel necessitates constant reading to understand its more levels. Its stylistic choices and the aesthetic principle make it authentic work of literature. Writing about Roy's fictional technique Pier Paolo Picicco says "the god of small things is one of the very few novels able to convey particular emotions along with an innovative and experiment craft of narration. The more so, if we remember that, being an Indian female author, she belongs to a group of writers not very keen to introduce or apply new methodology to the technique of writing... (319). The most striking quality of the novel is the relation between "the stylistic choice and the aesthetic principles of the author" (319) which help to make it comprehensive and authentic. So, the close study of the author's voice helps to understand the various aspects of the novel more deeply. Commenting on her incredible work and style Amar Nath Prasad observes:

Her extraordinary linguistic inventiveness, her satirical portrayal of the contemporary society, her psychological depth of the isolated characters, her new and original style containing many new things as opposed to traditional rendering of things etc. have certainly exercised a great influence on the readers of literary flavor. If a reader goes through this book, his heart is overflowed with many beautiful words and phrase, images and symbols. (245)

Gita Mehta accumulates six stories of different communities on single ground of the novel. The novel is set on the bank of the river Narmada. The river has religious faith of Indian people. In the novel, Gita Mehta uses metanarrative technique to unfold different stories of different communities. According to Bhasha Shuklia Sharm Gita Mehta:

Treats the elemental Hindu myths through the meta- narrative technique and uses Narmada as a gamut or 'sutra' to create and ideological consensus between Hinduism, Islam and Jainism... meta- narrative is a global or totalizing cultural narrative schema which orders and explains knowledge and experience. The prefix meta- means "beyond" and is here used to mean 'about', and narrative is a story constructed in a sequential fashion. (18)

A narrator is the speaker of the story but not always a character in a novel. The use of narrative technique depends on the perspective of the writer. The intricate narrative techniques of the novel seem didactic. The stories in the novels are: The Monk's story, the Teacher's story, the Executive's story, the Musician's story, and the Minstrel's story. All these stories are interlinked to each other that can't be separated from each other. It goes in a very systematic and linear way. This variation in narrative technique fills the gap between each story. Each character of the novel represents a particular community. In the beginning, the nameless narrator recounts his life and career from the first person perspective. He is a retired bureaucrat and again joins the manager post at Narmada rest house to escape himself from the hustling city life. His immense desire to live in peace drags him on the bank of Narmada river where the novel unfolds many stories. While working at Narmada rest house he develops intimacy with Tariq Mia, an old Muslim Mullah. The nameless narrator hears the stories and at the same time he gives background to each story.

The narrator meets the monk, and the monk narrates the story of his life in first person narration. In this story narrator shifts to the monk. This shift from the nameless narrator to monk assures the reliability of the story. Each story does not complete in the same chapter but it continues in the next chapter where it develops platform for next story. The monk keeps silent after raising a question that "I have loved just one thing in my life" (Mehta 14), but he seems reluctant to

answer the question. Curiously, in search of the answer the nameless narrator take help of Tariq Mia who narrates the teacher's story. Tariq Mia narrates the story from third person perspective.

The third story is narrated through the dairy of Nitin Bose, an executive. Here in the story, the narrator uses a different technique. Through the dairy Nitin Bose narrates his story from first person perspective and authenticates the narration.

In the courtesan's story narration again shifts from one narrative to another. The courtesan narrates his story in the first person point of view. In the same story there is another narrator, the courtesan's daughter, who provides detailed information of the courtesan's life. The alteration in narrative technique in the same story expresses the profound feeling and emotions of a particular person which is difficult to describe from second or third person perspective. The same things happen in the musician story when musician's daughter describes her story and she tells about her father's mastery over music which helps her to give an account of every raga. The narrator shows her familiarity with music which can be recount only by the master of the fields. In the next, The Minstrel's story, Tariq Mia again narrates the story of meeting with Naga Baba few years ago. He describes the details of an ascetic's life who always love to live in lonely and peaceful state of solitude. In the end of the novel the nameless narrator focuses on Professor Shankar's philosophy about people's belief and faith. Gita Mehta through his different narrative technique highlights the psychology of human mind with the help of various characters. Although the novel embodies fragments of events related to the life of main character but it clasps different characters and different events.

The novel *The God of Small Things* is notable for its complex narrative technique. The novel is written in non- sequential narrative style. Its elaborated narrative structure is the remarkable quality which is followed by layers after layers. The novel embodies two dominant narrative and many subordinate narratives. It primarily revolves around two dominant narratives through the use of flashback technique. The first narrative covers a twenty four hour period that is designated by Rahel's return to Kerala from United Sates in 1992. The second

narrative frames the story of Sophie Mol's arrival in India during December 1969 which covers almost two weeks period. The style in which these narratives cover the story makes the narrative technique of the writer unique in nature. The narrative form of the novel is nonlinear, it is the crucial aspect of the novel. The events are not set in chronological order. All the events are projected in pieces. In the beginning Rahel and Estha meet each other after 23 year long time. In the beginning writer unfold the story of the death of Sophie Mol, and Ammu, mother of Rahel and Estha. Then, the story goes back in the past when these characters were alive. Likewise, the story moves alternately in 1969 and 1993. This non-sequential narrative style help the author to deal with important events. The narrative technique also helps to build up the ideas and events at the root of the Ipe family's experience.

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CHAPTER 3

Ecocritical Concerns in *A River Sutra* and *The God of Small Things*

There are lots of novels which deal with the environmental theme and out of these novels *A River Sutra* and *The God of Small Things* are entrenched with the environmental theme from the beginning to the end. Both the novels have the prominent space in Indian English literature which can be read through the lens of ecocriticism. It is true that environmental crisis has crossed its limits in the present times. Literature can play an important role to ameliorate the environmental crisis. It can convey a message to human beings that living with nature and extracting limited resources is the only source to live in harmony. Nature has been the theme of earlier writings, but serious concern of ecology seems to be lacking in the earlier works. It has been a successive element of the stories of several nonfiction writings. These writings assert that the protection of the environment is very important not for the present times but also for the future. Ecocriticism analyses several points and urges to look into literary works from a new perspective. It recommends a link between literary and environmental study to extend the knowledge in both the fields. Ecocriticism treats literature as a model, we recall the critics who are in favour of this approach believe that people should adapt the same pattern they find in books.

There are lots of ecocritical concerns in the midst of both these novels. The study of both these novels from an ecocritical perspective begins with the depiction of landscape. Primarily, ecocriticism involves the phenomena of natural environment; it includes plants, trees, forests, lakes, ponds, streams, rivers and landscapes etc. The word landscape includes nature in general and also a number of phenomena or manifestations that are the parts of nature. Human being is not only the crucial part of nature or landscape, but also a product of it. It is believed that:

Human beings are moulded physically as well mentally, emotionally by natural atmosphere as they are by their surrounding social, cultural, educational and similar environments. That is reason why we have so many human races and culture with their distinctly characteristic features. (Selvamony 195)

In the essay “Mapping Island Mindscapes: The Literary and Cultural Uses of a Geographical Formation”, Jean Arnold suggests that island is a crucial thing within which the new ideas develop:

Islands have been useful to writers because their distinctive geographical formations have supplied narrative setting that isolate ideas... Because literary island forms setting for writers’ imagined solutions to cultural or perceptual problems, these island also have the power to reveal the unconscious concerns of the culture in which the writer lives and from which the literature arises. (24)

The given concept is certainly true for both these novels. Not only does the physical place supplies a setting for the narratives, but plays an important role in the plot of both the novels. Place plays a significant role in the theory of ecocriticism. Buell states that “an awakened sense of physical location and of belonging to some sort of place-based community has a great deal to do with activating environmental concern” (56). Environmental concerns relate to the protection and preservation of places from destruction. In a broader form the planet earth is also seen as a place which always remains in centre of environmental movements to protect it from the effects of human generated destruction. In the twenty-first century place and planet is perceived as an interdependent phenomenon (Buell 77). Place can be examined as of different types: from tiny space, to dwelling, to neighbourhood, to cities, to region, to the entire earth.

The word setting substituted by place is used to refer to “physical and sometimes spiritual background against which the action of a narrative takes place” (Selvamony 189). The term place in literature is an internal element of a literary work. The term ‘physical setting’ is a more comprehensively used term rather than the term place in literary works. Nirmal Selvamony argues that “it is not a mere setting for the action of the personae but the world where the personae have their being, for this reason space becomes an ontological determinant shaping up the nature of the personae” (189).

It is a fact that literary critics and readers have overemphasized the field of consciousness and neglected place or real space. This is because the literary art, like the other art has increasingly become a mental and individual oriented activity rather than a physical. Ecocriticism has made a remarkable contribution to discover this real space in a literary work. Glotfelty calls ecocriticism a redeeming ray of hope in the ocean of literary theories. Glotfelty says that “its redemptive force lies in its emphasis of place as the basic criterion of Literature or any cultural endeavour” (18). Arguably, ecocriticism focuses on the real place in the literary art. The setting of the novels *A River Sutra* and *The God of Small Things* is occupying the real place in their plot construction. For instance, in the novel *A River Sutra* the setting of the novel at the bank of Narmada is the real place. Likewise, *The God of Small Things* also possesses the real place that is the river Meenachal and the village Ayemenem. Ecocritics trace:

What role does the physical setting play in the plot of a novel... analyses the role played by the natural environment in the imagination of a cultural community. As an outcome, the text becomes a place where different vision of nature and varying images of culture are played out. (Sumathy 76)

In Indian culture rivers play a very significant role. Both the novelists have attempted to concentrate on the rivers through a very articulated bond of words. The river Narmada in *A River Sutra* and the river Meenachal in *The God of Small Things* provide a link which shows the connection of the human psyche to the locality of the rivers. In both these novels, the rivers have a distinguished space of respect. Besides that, both the rivers help us to understand the different religious and mythological concepts. The myth of their origin lies in Indian mythology. Both the rivers have a cultural string behind their origin. Nature and culture are interconnected phenomenon as Glotfelty opines: “Nature and culture do not exclude each other, but be entangled with each other in multiple ways” (15). Both the rivers mark the line that connects nature with culture on a single ground. The myth of the Narmada is tied inextricably to Shiva’s intervention. It is based on the legend of a severe drought which caught the earth. The gods and men approached Shiva to find a solution to the crisis. In response, Shiva began severe

penance along with Parvati. The penance released sweating in such quantities that it formed the river that fell down the slopes. It then became a woman who propitiated Shiva in a way that he blessed her to remain holy and inexhaustible. The sprightly movement delighted Shiva and he called her 'Narmada', meaning the one who gives pleasure.

The river Narmada is the fifth longest river of India. It covers 1,312 km area, and drain through the Gulf of Khambhat into the Arabian Sea, 30 km west of Bharuch city of Gujarat. The river Narmada flows from the hill of Amarkantak in Madhya Pradesh. It flows through several states of India including Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Gujarat, and after covering 1310 kilometer area it merges into the Arabian Sea in Gujarat's Bharuch district. The basin of the river occupies 98,796 km² areas (Kumar 795). It covers large area in the state of Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, and Maharashtra. The lower hill area of Gujarat is full of vegetation diversity. The novel *A River Sutra* is set "halfway up a hill of the Vindhya Range which is covered with forests" (Mehta 2).

Both the novels keep the portal of two well known rivers in their works. However, the obvious thread that connects both the novels is the river. Gita Mehta in her novel *A River Sutra* explores the abiding visual and oral traditions underpinning the myth of Narmada. The river Narmada's image, therefore, is connected with Shiva's divine power. The river Narmada is manifested as the universal female impulse. In the novel, Mehta presents the realistic picture of the river as discussed in Indian mythology. Mehta tells the mythological appearance of the river Narmada in the stories of the novel. In the novel, the river is presented in the form of a goddess. Mehta ponders the divine myth of the river Narmada. In this way, Mehta performs an act of revision that resurfaces throughout the novel. The novel celebrates the presence of myth as a tool that connects the past with the present. Mehta's sexually potent description of the origin of the river in the novel employs powerful erotic images of desire:

It is said that Shiva... was in ascetic trance so strenuous that rivulets of perspiration began flowing from his body down the hills. The stream took on the form of a women – the most dangerous of her

kind: a beautiful virgin innocently tempting even ascetics to pursue her, inflaming their lust by appearing at one moment as a lightly dancing girl, at another as a romantic dreamer, at yet another as a seductress loose-limbed with the lassitude of desire. Her inventive variation so amused Shiva that he named her Narmada, the delightful one, blessing her with ...you shall be forever holy, forever inexhaustible. (8)

The river Narmada is deeply associated with cultural practices. Narmada is the holiest river of India and the main spot of several cultural practices which enhance its significance. The river is known for the pilgrimage. In the novel, the bureaucrat expresses his religious views on pilgrimage and says that the practice of pilgrimage endures to generate “the heat that links men to the energy of the universe, as the Narmada river is thought to link mankind to the energy of Shiva” (8). These views show that the river is linked with ideologies of Hindu Religion. The Narmada river is the multiple manifestation of Indian culture: “a mere glimpse of the Narmada’s water is supposed to cleanse a human being of generations of sinful births” (151). It is supposed to contain four hundred billion sacred spots on her banks and is believed to link mankind to the energy of Shiva.

The vary location of Mehta’s narrative is within the waterscapes of the Vindhya Range area where the river flows. The river Narmada is a powerful signifier of purity, and homogeneity. *A River Sutra* makes clear its involvement with the sacred in the landscape at every turn. The river is the central character of the novel. In the beginning of the novel the landscape is described as sacred and connected with mythic description:

...the bungalow’s proximity to the Narmada River was its particular attraction. The river is among our holiest pilgrimage sites, worshipped as the daughter of the god Shiva. During a tour of the area I had been further intrigued to discover the criminal offense of attempted suicide is often ignored if the offender is trying to kill himself in the water of the Narmada. (2)

The sacred landscape is observed by the bureaucrat. He gives an account of the river Narmada and its surrounding area. The river Narmada is the only source that attracts the bureaucrat to the place where he works on the post of a manager. The bureaucrat was deeply agitated with the city life and he joins at a post of manager at the rest house which is built on the bank of Narmada. It gives him immense pleasure while living with nature. He accepts that after the death of his wife, he feels lonely and wishes to spend his rest of life with nature. After joining at the rest house he says that he has come out from the busy life of the cities:

The Government still pays my wages but I no longer think of myself as a bureaucrat. Bureaucrat belongs too much to the world, and I have fulfilled my worldly obligation. I am now a vanaprasthi, someone who has retired to the forest to reflect. Of course, I was forced to modify tradition, having spent my childhood in Bombay and my career as civil servant working only in cities. Although my desire to withdraw from the world grew more urgent as I aged I was simply not equipped to wander into the jungle and become a forest hermit, surviving on fruit and roots. (1)

Thus, his inner revolt against the hustle and bustle of city life develops his deep affection to live in a peaceful place. It reflects that nature is the only thing that befriends a human being when the feeling of loneliness tries to conquer over human beings. He is deeply fascinated by the location of the rest house. He is also attracted to the natural beauty of the landscape, forest, sky and especially of the river. He finds the place very calm and pure in comparison to the city's polluted atmosphere. A true and clean picture of nature illustrated in the novel discloses the uncontaminated life of nature and its inhabitants. The birds, animals, plants, all seem to live in an interconnected harmony with one another. The bureaucrat longs for such a harmony and seeks inspiration from the place:

On entering the jungle for my morning walk, I loiter under the tree... I admire the red blossom shaken from the flame trees by clambering monkeys. Or I pause between the branches rooted in the soil around

an immense banyan tree... to watch birds guarding their nest from the squirrels streaking through the flat leaves. (43)

Although he has escaped himself from the life where he has direct access to all the convenient things of modern life, but his transformation into forest life gave him immense pleasure which he never experienced in his entire life while working in the cities. The bureaucrat accepts that it was his first experience of living with nature: "... having spent my childhood in Bombay and my career as a civil servant working only in cities..." (1). Nature plays a prominent role in shaping the mind of the characters. A balanced ecosystem enables human to live a harmonious life. The bureaucrat's attraction towards the natural world shows his protest against the industrialism. Famous critic Jonathan Bate argues that the romantic poet William Wordsworth's works "form a coherent protest against the dominant ideology of political economy and industrialism" (Clark 15). In addition to that Timothy Clark observed that nature stimulates the inner sense of human being. The bureaucrat's decision to escape is the result of stimulation of the nature, so his inner sense compels him to live with nature.

Following the description of the landscape of the river Narmada, the nameless bureaucrat goes on to describe his own activities as an attempt to come to terms with this place. His wandering around the place supplies the background to the underlying myth of the origin of the river Narmada which he reveals in the stories of the novel. This initial description of the narrative projection of the Narmada suggests innocence, lightness, and an aimlessness that belies any sense of responsibility. It merely reflects an aesthetic aim rather than a political aim of the narrator.

The landscape provides the pleasure to the bureaucrat that he seeks from the place. It also evokes him to give an account of his past life. The setting of the novel is a crucial phenomenon. It reveals several other interlinked tales which the nameless narrator narrates while wandering in the forest around the rest house. The place is totally lonely and gives him full time to look back into his past life's incidents.

The term ecology, the study of the interrelationship of living things to each other and to their environment, is concerned with the Romantic conception regarding nature in which nature is perceived as a holistic living agent or the spirit in which all participate and interact (Clark 16). The romantic ecology respects the green earth because it endorses the belief that “neither physical nor psychologically can we live without green things” (Clark 16). The statement makes more sense in the case of the bureaucrat in the novel *A River Sutra*. The psyche of the bureaucrat develops “an intimate connection between the condition in which we work and the way in which we live with nature” (Clark 17). The mental instability while living in cities seems true in Ruskin’s statement where he says that “no pleasure anywhere is taken in modern buildings, and we find all men of true feeling delighting to escape out of modern cities into nature: hence... that peculiar love of landscape...”(qtd. in Clark 17).

The river Narmada is depicted as the ‘sutra’ or the link in the novel. It connects all the six stories through a single string. Besides the account of bureaucrat’s personal experience, the river gorges the setting of all the other six stories. There are common things in all the stories that they all are set at the same place. It is the landscape which helps to unfold new story related to the place. The place gives the preface to the stories and effects the characters of all the stories. The characters are also deeply attached to the place. The novel presents the picture of a tribal village of Vano situated on the bank of the river Narmada. The Vano village lies on the way from the rest house in the jungle where the bureaucrat daily goes for a morning walk. One day he encounters some tribal women from the village. They warmly welcome him and he is astonished at being welcomed by those with whom he is not familiar at all. A few days staying at the rest house he meets with the tribes of the village as some of them serve as the guards of the rest house. He gathers information and reveals the historical incidents related to the tribes:

Our bungalow guards are hired from Vano and enjoy a reputation for fierceness as descendants of tribal race... the Vano village deity is a stone image of a half woman with the full breasts of a fertility symbol but the torso of a coiled snake, because the tribes believe they once

ruled a great snake kingdom until they were defeated by the god of the Aryans. Saved from annihilation only by a divine personification of the Narmada river, the grateful tribals conferred on the river the gift of annulling the effects of snakebite. (6)

The most significant feature of tribal culture is the respect of forest and river as god and goddess. The Vano tribes worship Narmada as a goddess that cures fatal diseases like madness and snakebite. Tribal's faith in the magic power of the river is firm. Their invocation to the river reveals the depth of their devotion to the holy river:

Salutation in the morning and at night to thee,
O Narmada, defend me from the serpent's poison. (6)

Nitin Bose, an executive in Calcutta's oldest tea company, visits the rest house. Here, the place becomes the setting of another interlinked story in the novel. Nitin Bose gives his diary to the bureaucrat, which is based on his experience that he got from his association with the tribal lady. While living in the rest house on the bank of the river Narmada, Nitin Bose falls in love with the lady named Rima. He enjoys her company in the darkness at the bank of the river. The place provides them full protection and opportunity to make love. In the case of Nitin Bose, the peaceful place becomes important when he hears the sound of the lady calling him by his name from the dark distant place. He expects that she will come close to him in the lonely place, but, to his dismay, she does not come. Consequently, he becomes the victim of insanity. He runs after the voice coming from a bush. As he describes:

Heedless of the low branches whipping against my body, I ran after her through the jungle calling her name, my voice loud in the night.
(133)

Nitin Bose follows the voice and reaches the place where Rima is standing with a lantern at her feet. When Nitin Bose tries to touch her, she disappears in the darkness leaving Nitin Bose alone with his soul possessed by her. Nitin Bose was discovered in an unconscious state lying in the jungle. Next morning he is cured by a tribal priest who tries to free his soul from the possession of Rima's spirit. When

the priest failed in his effort, he suggests him (Nitin Bose) to visit the shrine situated on the bank of the Narmada river. Following the priest's advice, Nitin Bose visits the place with the help of the bureaucrat. Finally, after the performance of tribal ritual under the guidance of the tribes Nitin Bose is freed from the possession of Rima's spirit.

The river Narmada is a place of life in the case of Nitin Bose who recovers from lunacy after appeasing the goddess. The site of the river is observed as heterotopias in Foucaulten term. It is the constant transitive site for the bureaucrat, bandit, ascetic, archeologists, civil servant, and tribes. In Foucaulten terms their space is called heterotopias, which refers to "actual location that can both reflect and challenge the stratification of other social spaces, or time in a single locale" (Banerjee 116). The river befits in heterotopic space, and it's environ area are both a sacred (where people gain release from the cycle of birth and rebirth), and a profane space (where child prostitution, abject poverty, killing are a part of everyday life).

The bureaucrat is attracted to the beauty of the river and he cannot detach himself from the site. He views the river from the terrace of the rest house. He admits that when he had finished Nitin Bose's dairy, the story made no sense to him. At early morning when dawn lightened the sky, he saw the Narmada River "leaping headlong through the distant marble rocks, the spraying waterfalls refracting the first rays of sun into arcs of color as if the river were a woman adorning herself with jewels" (139). The river is described as a bride: "I watched the water slowly redden, catching the reflection of the rose, colors of dawn, and imagined the river as a woman painting her palm and the soles of her feet with vermilion as she prepared to meet her lover (139).

Like Gita Mehta, Arundhati Roy also describes the natural landscapes in her novel *The God of Small Things*. Roy accepts that natural landscape plays a crucial role in the construction of the novel. She asserts:

I think the kind of landscape that you grew up in, it lives in you. I don't think it's true of people who've grown up in cities so much, you may love buildings but I don't think you can love it in the way that you

love tree or a river or the colour of the earth, it's different kind of love. I'm not a very well read person but I don't imagine that kind of gut love for earth can be replaced by the open landscape. It's a much clever person who grew up in city, savvy and much smarter in many ways. If you spent your childhood catching fish and just learning to be quite, the landscape just seep into you. (qtd. in Chien 198)

Roy makes a clear picture about the role of landscape to shape a story. The landscape is the only source that stimulates the person to write about the things which he has experienced in his life. Roy says "Even now when I back go to Kerala and it makes me want to, cry if something happens to that place" (qtd. in Chien 198). However, the profound attachment of human being to place is an instinct quality of his behaviour. In fiction the same thing happens to the characters of the fiction. Eudora observes that "the truth is, fiction depend for its life on place" (qtd in Salvomony 189).

The river Meenachal is also connected with a cultural string. But in the novel, it is not described in the mythological context. It is presented in the present context. Unlike *A River Sutra*, *The God of Small Things* deals with modern way of life. In *A River Sutra* Mehta has depicted the pastoral picture in the novel, but Arundhati Roy has presented urban life in the novel. Although the novel's setting is at the village Ayemenem, but the setting represents the modern Ayemenem.

Unlike the novel *A River Sutra*, *The God of Small Things* does not reveal the story in chronological order, but it unfolds bit by bit to the readers. The story is recreated through the use of flash- back and flash forward technique. The temporal setting shifts back and forth from 1969, when fraternal twins Rahel and Estha are seven years old, to 1993, when they are united at the age of 30. The common thing that remains the same is the physical setting of the novel. The setting of the novel takes place in a village named Ayemenem, a Kottayan district in Kerala, India. It does not alter with the time. The novel describes the finest picture of two landscapes that is the river Meenachal and the village Ayemenem. These two landscapes operate from the center position in the novel. The influence of these two landscapes on the characters of the novel is undeniable.

The river Meenachal is the most recognised river of the state Kerala. The River Meenachal originates from the streams of Western Ghats. It flows through the places; Poonjar, Teekoy, Erattupetta, Palai, Ettamanoor, and Kottayam. After flowing 78 km it ends at the Vembanad Lake in the Kumarrakom district of Kerala. The water of this river is used for drinking purposes and irrigation. In olden days, it has been the way of water transport facilities. During monsoon season, the water from this river floods the low area and during the summer the water goes down and cause of drought in the areas. According to Kerala Irrigation Department the river covers 1208.11 km² area, and the total annual yield of 2,349 million cubic meters and an annual utilizable yield of 110 million cubic meters. The river forms 38 tributaries, including major and minor ones (Vincy 663). So, the vast capacity of water containing shows the significance of the river in the state.

The river Meenachal (actual name Meenachil) in *The God of Small Things* also associated with Shiva's myth. It is believed that the name Meenachal has been derived from the goddess Meenashi of Madurai, the warrior goddess of the ruling Karthas of Meenachil. According to various mythological legends this river began from the Kamandalu (holy water Vessel) of the sage Gauna. It is believed that the sage filled his vessel from the water of seven holy rivers; Ganga, Yamuna, Saraswati, Sindhu, Narmada, Godavari, and Kaveri. The sage also kept an idol of Lord Subramanya, Lord Shiva's son. The sage Gauna was excited to meet divine appearance of lord Rama and Sita, on their return journey to Ayodhya, after killing Ravana. In the procession devoted to Rama's returned Gauna failed to get glimpse of Rama and his wife Sita. In agitation, he threw the water vessel away. From the vessel the idol of Subramanya appeared in physical form. The water took the form of river and thus the present Meenachal River was formed. Thus, the mythological legend of the origin of the rivers regard the appearance of the rivers bond with the thread of culture. However, the mythological origin of the river has a very significant role in the present crisis of environment. Earlier, as depicted in the mythologies, both the rivers appeared on the earth for the welfare of the human being and other creatures. The rivers play an important role in the life cycle on the earth. It nourishes human beings as well as other creatures on earth. For instance, in a mythological legend the river Narmada emerged as a boom to men and gods

when they were facing a crisis of severe drought. In this sense, rivers occupy a much higher place than god.

A striking presence of the landscapes in the novels holds the central position in the novel. It is the landscape which reveals several things that any character may fail. In the novel *The God of Small Things* the river Meenachal is represented as a tool to evoke past memories in the mind of Estha and Rahel. In the novel, the river plays a central role. The twins often dreamt of the river in their childhood. In their childhood the river was the only source of their pleasure. It was described as “it was warm, the water green like reapplied silk. With fish in it. With the sky and trees in it. And at night, the broken yellow moon in it” (123).

This illustrative image of the river tells the purity of its water and demonstrates the ecological connection between river and fish. In their childhood the river’s water was so pure and transparent that the reflection of the sky and trees can be seen clearly. The river seemed as an object of joy. In the beginning the river is showed as the source of pleasure, but with the pace of time it becomes the victim of pollution, which came due to acceleration in the process of development. The river’s attachment with twins in the novel shows the significance of the river. The river Meenachal attracts the readers with its beautiful depiction, especially, in moon night: “it was past midnight. The river had risen, its waters quick and black, snaking towards the sea, carrying with it cloudy night skies, a whole palm frond, part of a thatched fence, and other gifts the wind had given”(289).

The novel also shows that the river was used for transportation in earlier days when the transportation facilities were very limited. However, later also, it was used as a source of transportation. People used to cross the river by boats and reached other places. All the commercial transportation was carried out through the way of the river. The provisions of the Paradise Pickles and preserves were supplied to the other side of the river: “A boat to row across the river. Akkara. The other side. A boat to carry provisions. Matches, cloths, pots and pans. The things they would need and could not swim with” (196).

The river Meenachal plays a vital role in the story of the novel. The river gives shelter to Ammu and Velutha at night when they meet each other. The river bank is depicted as the happiest place for Ammu when she walks out to the river bank to meet Velutha. Her zeal to meet Velutha is depicted as:

She moved quickly through the darkness, like an insect following a chemical trail. She knew the path to the river as well as her children did and could have found her way there blindfolded. She didn't know what it was that made her hurry through the undergrowth. That turned her walk into a run. That made her arrive on the bank of the Meenachal breathless. Sobbing. As though she was late for sometime. As though her life depended on getting there in time. As though she knew he would be there... (332)

Both the lovers get pleasure at the bank of the river. They realise the dark night at the bank of the river, and feel that the place belongs to them. The place provides protection to them and gives a space to share their feelings to each other. The dark night:

As he rose from the dark river and walked up the stone step, she saw that the world they stood in was his. That he belonged to it. That it belonged to him. The water. The mud. The trees. The fish. The stars. (333)

The river is represented as the transformative trope that evolves into a dangerous force by killing the child Sophie Mol. The river is represented as an unstable space where the twins spend the happier time of their childhood and their most horrific one with Sophie Mol's death:

Three children on the riverbank. A pair of twins and another, whose mauve corduroy pinafore said Holiday! In a tilting, happy font. Wet leaves in the tree shimmered like beaten metal. Dense clumps of yellow bamboo drooped into the river as though grieving in advance for what they knew was going to happen. The river itself was dark and quiet. An absence rather than a presence, betraying no sign of how high and strong it really was... there was no storm- music. No

whirlpool spun up from the inky depths of the Meenachal. No shark supervised the tragedy. Just a quiet handing- over ceremony. A boat spilling its cargo. A river accepting the offering. (275- 277)

Roy uses the boat as a device, it was a boat: "a tiny wooden vallon". The boat is shown as a vehicle of love that Ammu used to cross the river to meet Velutha. It is the river which connects them. Roy has made a constant presentation of river in the lives of the twins, and everyone else who lives in or visits the Ayemenem home. Thus, "the first third of the river" with the thirteen steps under the surface was "their friend, with the afternoon weed and the different kind of fish". Here, twins' uncle has taught them to swim and the twins had discovered the "disconnected delight of underwater farting". Here, they had also learnt how to fish, to thread coiling purple earthworms onto hooks on the fishing rod that Velutha made from "slender culms of yellow bamboo". However, they were aware that the "second third was where the really Deep began". They learned that here the "current was swift and certain," when the tide was in, the backwater push with great force. The last third was shallow again and oozed mud, and though "twins could swim like seals," they extended the Meenachal "the deference it deserved" (258). Unfortunately, for Sophie Mol, who did not know how to swim, the Meenachal dealt the fatal blow. Velutha's discovery of her little wrinkled body hammers home the instability and whimsical nature of the river:

Something bobs past in the water and the colours catch his eye. Mauve. Redbrown. Beach sand. It moves with the current, swiftly towards the sea... it's a wrinkled mermaid... He pulls her out of the water into his boat. He puts his thin cotton towel under her, she lies at the bottom of his boat with his silver haul of small fish. He rows home... thinking how wrong it is for a fisherman to believe that he knows his river well. No one knows the Meenachal. No one knows what it may snatch or suddenly yield. Or when that is what makes fishermen pray. (258-259)

Socially aware intellectuals cannot ignore the environment in the modern world. Today, the environmental crisis has touched its peak. It has compelled us to

think about the growing problem of today's world and the future world. Literature is known for reflecting contemporary issues. The environmental issue is one the most burning issues for today's generation. Both the novels have included modern environmental issues in their theme. Although *A River Sutra* does not explicitly deal with environmental degradation, but a representation of ecological balance shows it as an environmental work. Gita Mehta has followed the distinctive approach to make her reader aware of environmental hazards. The novel *A River Sutra* presents the uncontaminated picture of the river Narmada and the place which reveals that living in an uncontaminated environment has a great deal of happiness. All the stories end with a happy ending. *A River Sutra* presents the picture of pastoral life living with uncontaminated environment. The pastoral picture shows the importance of fresh air, water and soil.

A River Sutra presents the picture of river that is clean and clear. It shows that a river is born to serve both living creatures and non living things on the earth. The cleanness of the river: "you clean the earth of its impurities. The devout call you Surasa the holy soul" (273). In the novel Naga Baba depicts the clean picture of the river Narmada in his chanting:

Turtles and river dolphins find refuge in your water
Alighting herons play upon your tranquil surface.
Fish and crocodiles are gathered in your embrace.
O holy Narmada. (279)

In contradiction to the image presented in the Novel *A River Sutra*, the river Narmada is polluting fast. The pollution is the result of realising huge quantity of waste from cities and villages situated along the river and effluents discharged from industries. According to Bureau of Indian standard 2296 norms, the quality of the water has fallen into "B" category (Saxena). In contrast to the present condition of the river, the novel tries to bind it with the mythological string. It also tries to convey a message that the river is not only a utility source for a human being but it protects us, as in a chanting it is said:

You remove the stains of evil.
You release the wheel of suffering.

You lift the burdens of the world.

O Holy Narmada. (Mehta, *A River Sutra* 279)

On the other hand, *The God of Small Things* directly deals with the environmental hazards. Roy, in her novel, keenly observes the environmental crisis. The novel describes a burning problem of pollution in a rhetorical manner. Roy's *The God of Small Things* deals with environmental issues which are brought by hegemonic power of political expediency and corporate greed. Roy's struggle for Narmada river, and her stand for Narmada Bachao Andolan manifests her deep concern for rivers and the environment. In the novel it is clearly depicted that the motherly figure, clean, balmy Meenachal River is changed into "a living yardstick of body politic of Ayemenem" (Banerjee 193). Earlier, before the death of Sophie Mole it was full of tall and lush green trees and the fish were flying:

They dreamed of the river. Of the coconut trees that bent into it and watched, with coconut eyes, the boats slide by. Upstream in the morning. Downstream in the evening. And the dull, sullen sound of the boatmen's bamboo poles as they thudded against the dark, oiled boatwood. It was warm, the water. Graygreen. Like rippled silk. With fish in it. With the sky and trees in it. And at night, the broken yellow moon in it. (Roy, *The God of Small Things* 124)

After twenty- three year later when the twins reunited. Illustrative narration in the novel reflects the transformation of the village Ayemenem and the river Meenachal. The village had turned into an urban trollop, and has become another twentieth century ugly ubiquitous cityscape. Same is the case with the river, now it reflects only the sores, the warts and the pollution in it. Rahel exhibits that the river has turned into a sewer:

Years later... it greeted her with a ghastly skull's smile, with hole where teeth had been, and a limp hand raised from a hospital bed... the river was no more than a swollen drain now... with the occasional silver slant of a dead fish... children hung their bottoms over the edge and defecated directly onto the squelchy, sucking mud of the exposed river bed... upstream, clean mothers washed clothes

and pots in unadulterated factory effluents. People bathed. Severed torsos soaping themselves, arranged like dark busts on a thin, rocking, ribbon lawn. On warm days the smell of shit lifted of the river and hovered over Ayemenem like a hat. (124)

Roy has explicitly depicted picture of pollution and death in her novel. The use of the technique of stream of consciousness to narrate the constant flux from past to present makes the illustration more authentic in nature. The narration in the novel flows like the tide of the river Meenachal. The issue of pollution needs to be examined in the actual contexts. The issues that came to the forefront during the examination of the novel seems the most threaten issues. The novel points out the problem of water pollution that has been the cause of emulsion of toxic water released from factories into the pure water of rivers. The novelist points out that like the river Meenachal several other rivers have been subjected to decay by resealing uncontrolled toxic water of factories. When Estha visits the river Meenachal after twenty three years he finds that the river was no more than “a slow, slugging green ribbon lawn that ferried garbage to the sea”, and Estha finds that the river “smelled of shit, and pesticides brought with World Bank loans. Most of the fish had died. The ones that survived suffered from fin- rot and had broken out in boils” (Roy, *The God of Small Things* 13). The picture of the polluted river compels us to think about the progress in the development that has been a severe cause of reduction in water quality of the river. The boom in production has led the environment at the edge of crisis. Human being is disturbing nature by his directs interference in the natural phenomena. Excessive explosion in population has raised the problem of scarcity of necessary goods. The novel exhibits that human wastes and pesticide are the two source of pollution. Sewage and industrial wastes are discharged into the rivers. Residential wastes primarily from kitchens, bathrooms, laundries, toilets etc are released into the rivers through sewage without pre treatment of the sources. The resulting water of the rivers which is highly contaminated affects our aquatic ecosystems. The fishes of the river Meenachal had been the victims of the toxic water in the novel which was main cause of their death. The jumbling of human wastes with the water of river makes the picture more disgusting during the summer season. It looks like “the shit lifted

off the river and hovered over Ayemenem like a hot.”(43), the cause behind the disaster is the excessive exploitation of the resources to fulfil the demands of growing population. Roy says in the novel:

...down river, a salt water barrage had been built, in exchange for vote from the influential paddy- farmer lobby. The barrage regulates the inflow of salt water from the back waters that opened into the Arabian Sea. So, now they had two harvests a year instead of one. More rice, for the price of a river. (44)

Ayemenem and the Ayemenem House constitute the setting of the novel *The God of Small Things*. Although the village where the entire story of the novel unfolds is a fictional place but autobiographical elements in the novel highlight the similarity and differences between the original Ayemenem and the Ayemenem presented in the novel. Focusing entirely on the fictional Ayemenem, it attempts to show how the values of the locale and the house have been responsible for the shaping of the rebellious spirit of the leading character in the novel- Ammu. The Ayemenem is a place of social, political and moral corruption.

Ayemenem is a village situated in Kottayam district of Kerala, India. The name of the village is a combination of two words. Ay in the Tamil language means ‘five’ and Vanam in Sanskrit means ‘forest’: Ayemenem is the land of five forests. Two- third of the village consists of rice fields. It is two meters below the sea level, from June to August when monsoon bursts the region floods. The river Meenachal is the main source of water supply to the village. The availability of water helps to grow rice crops in the region. Extensive area of Punch Padam (Paddy Fields) stretches up to Vempanattu Lake. These paddy fields were submerged in water as they are two meters below the sea level. Before 1970, the paddy was grown just once a year. In the monsoon season, an outer bund made of mud was built around the padams. These bunds helped to merge the padam with the sea water and extra water from the padams was pumped out to prepare the padam and the soil for cultivation. The entire process took one month. The season started in August-September and finished in January-February by the time of harvesting. March, April, May months are dry seasons and all these padams

were open for cattle and ducks. At the outset of the novel the month of May is described as humid and hot:

May in Ayemenem is a hot, brooding month. The days are long and humid. The river shrinks and black crows gorge on bright mangoes in still, dustgreen trees. Red bananas ripen. Jackfruit burst. Dissolute bluebottles hum vacuously in the fruity air. Then they stun themselves against clear windowpanes and die, fatly baffled in the sun. (1)

In June-July Monsoon starts and the outer bunds of all padams are destroyed by flood. Then again starts the season after the monsoon. As shown in the novel:

...by early June the southwest monsoon breaks and there are three months of wind and water with short spells of sharp, glittering sunshine that thrilled children snatch to play. Countryside turns an immodest green. Boundaries blur as tapioca fences take root and bloom. Brick walls turn moss green. Pepper vines snake up electric poles. Wild creepers burst through laterite banks and spill across flooded roads... (1)

The novel gives a realistic picture of the village. It reflects the writer's awareness regarding the small things where she tries to interlink the physical setting with the plot of the novel. Roy starts the novel with the depiction of the village surrounding and its climate. Ayemenem is the main place where the all story unfolds. The village belongs to Pappachi and Mammachi, parents of Ammu. Ammu's father, Pappachi comes back to Ayemenem after his retirement. For Ammu, the village was the alienated place because she feels lonely at home: "there was little for a young girl to do in Ayemenem other than to wait for marriage proposal.... All the day she dreamed of escaping from Ayemenem and the clutches of her ill-tempered father and bitter, long-suffering mother" (38). The village for Ammu does not seem suitable. While living too long in the village, she forced herself to engage with a person who later on divorced her and compelled her to spend her life with his boss. Here, the impact of living isolated in a village

changes the life of Ammu. Ammu gets married to escape herself from the village even without the consent of her parents. When she is divorced, she comes back to Ayemenem. She finds a different nature of her parents of total neglect. Her loneliness remains the same and again she commits a second mistake when she gets attracted towards Velutha.

The History House in Ayemenem symbolically represents the moral corruption and spiritual degeneration of the place. It is located in the middle of an abandoned rubber estate. It was Kari Saipu's house. Saipu in Malayalam means a white man. But in the novel, Kari Saipu is "the Black Sahib", he is "Ayemenem's own Kurtz" (52). Ayemenem willingly catered to his dark passions, and the place itself was "his private heart of Darkness" (52). It is called History House where Kari Saipu shot himself when his boy lover was sent to school by his parents. The history House also symbolises the horrors and discontents brought about by the advancing human civilisation.

The Ayemenem house plays an important role in the story of the novel. its appearance at the time of Sophie Mol's arrival points at the absence of any bond between the house and its member:

It was a grand old house, the Ayemenem House, but all of- looking. As though it had little to do with the people that lived in it. Like an old man with rheumy eyes watching play, seeing only transience in their shrill elation and their whole- hearted commitment to life. (165)

Sophie Mol feels the suffocating atmosphere in the house and considers herself as "a captured spy in enemy territory" (238). Her mother Margeret Kochamma has also experienced the same feeling after the death of Sophie Mol: "the fear and gloom that hung over the Ayemenem House" (263). The fresh atmosphere of the village Ayemenem also deteriorated along with the river Meenachal. The village, which twenty three years ago, was known for freshness and rural quietness has been shifted to disturbance of the modern world. When Rehal returns to Ayemenem, she finds the population of the village has "swelled to size of a little town" (125).

The progress of development is measured by Estha when he finds “the new, freshly baked, iced, gulf- money houses built by nurses, masons, wire benders and bank clerks who worked hard and unhappy in far away places” (46). The increasing population is the resting cause of the environmental crisis. The novel depicts the crowd at a railway station and its impact on the society. The novel incidentally comments on the huge and increasing population of the country: “scurrying hurrying buying, selling luggage, trundling porter paying children sitting people spitting coming going begging bargaining reservation checking. Echoing station sound” (300). At the other place the novelist observes that Estha is vomiting and imagining a “Basin City” in the “not clean washbasin”:

The basin had steel taps, and rust stain. And a brownwebbed mesh of hairline cracks, like the road of some great, intricate city...Estha convulsed, but nothing came. Just thoughts. And they floated out and floated back in. Ammu couldn't see them. They hovered like storm cloud over the basin city. But the basin men and basin women went about their usual basin business. Basin cars, and buses, still whizzed around. Basin life went on. (108)

Gita Mehta in her novel *A River Sutra* exhibits the concern of ecofeminism. She describes the ecofeminist issues in her novel. Ecofeminism is a social movement that interconnects the oppression of women and nature on the single ground. It considers women as very close to nature and condemns masculinity for their exploitative attitude toward nature and women. Ecofeminists argue that nature and women have the production capability. Nature nourishes human being and women also do the same task. More recently, ecofeminist scholar has “extended their analysis to consider the interconnection between sexism, the domination of nature (including animals), and also racism and social inequality” (Patel). It is a movement working against the interconnected oppressions of gender, race, class and nature. In short terms, it establishes connection between exploitation and domination of women with that of the environment, and argues that there is a connection between women and nature that comes from their shared history of oppression by a patriarchal Western society (Patel).

The term ecofeminism has been beautifully demonstrated in the novel *A River Sutra*. The concept of ecofeminism is “all about the women’s equation with nature and her act of reaching out into nature in her crises and despair, coming close to nature, the women imbibe the serenity and strength of this unchanged, ‘immortal’ nature” (Patel). Gita Mehta beautifully portrays the Narmada River as a young and attractive woman: “I can see the river flowing to meet her bridegroom in all those variations that delighted the Ascetic while on her destination” (Mehta, *A River Sutra* 9). In the novel, the river is presented as a living being full of human emotion. In the courtesan’s story Gita Mehta moves her eyes at the miserable conditions of women in the patriarchal society. The courtesan’s story is about a mother, a courtesan, and her daughter. It manifests the situation where the woman is treated as a consumer’s good, an instrument of pleasure. A woman meets the bureaucrat to take his help to escape her daughter from the most wanted bandit. The girl was abducted by the bandit Rahul Singh. In the story, the writer shows that a man thinks women as objects of entertainment. The woman was a dancer and she teaches the art to her daughter. The courtesan represents the particular group of courtesans which is neglected by the society. The courtesans are not considered as human beings, but they are used for entertainment only:

The city is owned by men who believe every human being has a price, and a full purse is power. Trained as scholars, artist, musician, dancer, we are only women to them, our true function to heave on a mattress and be recompensed by some tawdry necklace flashing its vulgarity on a crushed pillow. When they come to our haveli they throw cigarette case, watches, and dirty bank notes at our feet as we dance.... (168)

Men considered women as merely to provide enjoyment and as a source of sexual pleasure. The girl was forcefully married to the bandit and she had to spend the rest of her life as the wife of a bandit. Being abducted is considered as a sin in the society and society will not accept her: “Who will accept her as a wife, a girl captured and kept by criminals for two long years” (173). This projects the vulnerability of a woman while living in a male dominated society. Women are

subjugated and they are not permitted to advocate their arguments. The bandit Rahul Singh dies in an encounter, the girl ends her life in the Narmada and even her mother takes it lightly as if it were a perfectly normal thing: “only that she was happy her daughter died in the Narmada because she would be purified of all her sins...” (190). There is a link between the girl and the river, the river Narmada is the only shelter for her to avoid all the terrible situations. She is scared to imagine her life ‘the life of a courtesan’ and ‘the life of a bandit’s wife’, so she turns to the Narmada (nature) as the only escape to avoid her despair and crisis.

The Minstrel’s story is about a girl-child and a Naga monk who saved her from a brothel and gave her a new birth. The story also reflects the cruelty of male dominated society. In the beginning, the girl is just an exploited, abused child, who does not even have a name. She was called ‘misfortune’ by her father because her mother had died at her birth. Her father doesn’t care for her and always carried out his atrocities, even deprives her of take food: “I was never allowed to eat until everyone else had eaten. So I was always hungry. And I was beaten by my father (250). Even more, his father sold her to a brothel where she again becomes the victim of the customers who came there for their sexual pleasure. These customers have been depicted as a demon, nobody even bother about her. All of them enjoy her, here she had been sexually abused inspite of being a child. The customers called her ‘Chand’; because, they said, her skin was ‘soft’ as moonlight. Somehow, the child was saved by the monk and then taken into the dense jungle far away from the locality and finally taken across the Narmada. Here, she starts her new birth, new life, learns many new things in the lap of nature (Narmada). The Naga Baba endowed her with a new name ‘Uma’. The Naga Baba teaches her to live with nature:

He taught her to drink fresh milk directly from the teats of wandering goats, and how to look for cattle markings. Together they collected pats of cow dung to be left in the sun to dry... as her new life become more real to her than her old.... (249)

The child takes the dip in the cold water so that she can be daughter of Narmada. The girl child is associated with the Narmada river, it is said that “if the

Narmada was born from Shiva's penance, then surely Uma was born of the Naga Baba's penance (258). Gradually, Uma grows up and become a 'singer- saint' at temple- festivals. She sings about the holiness of the river Narmada. It connects her with the river Narmada. There are many descriptions which draw a similarity between Uma and the river. Mehta depicts the river as woman like Uma who feels a strong desire to meet her Lord of Rivers. Uma also yearns to meet her husband. The Naga Baba comes back as Prof. Shankar in Uma's life after three years. He fulfils all her desires.

The Musician's Story reflects the similarity between the pursuits of a woman and the spontaneity of the river (nature). In this story the musician tries to focus on the similarity between nature and music. As the musician teaches her daughter to sing, he instructs her to "imagine a raga as a river bed. You must think yourself as the water washed over stone, shaping it with the relentless touch of your love" (16). Later on (after being jilted) she reaches out to the river Narmada with the hope to get restored to her inspiration and still she hopes.

The violation of nature is linked the violation and marginalisation of women. Women produce and reproduce life biologically. Ecofeminism "from its inception has insisted on the link between nature and culture, between the forms of exploitation of nature and the forms of the oppression of women" (Murphy 23). Largely based upon this perception, both the novels illustrate evidence of the interconnected domination of nature and women by the various entities of patriarchal or masculine worldviews. An ecofeminist analysis of *A River Sutra* and *The God of Small Things* discover ecofeminist themes that contribute to the development of the environmental ethics that permeates their work. The novels represent rivers as metaphors for the feminine, where the woman is manipulated and desexualised by patriarchy. In *The God of Small Things*, Arundhati Roy has linked the women's situation to the deteriorating state of the environment. As articulated in the novel in all the three generations, women become the victims of patriarchal society. Nature and woman undergo suffering simultaneously. The novel depicts the patriarchal society that has dominated both nature and woman, resulting in destruction of nature and demoralisation of woman. Both nature and

woman suffer damage and destruction. The feeling of woman is neglected in the male oriented society. In Ammu's case her decision to marry was protested by her family and later on her attachment with Velutha was not accepted by the society.

Ecofeminists believe that unless nature is protected, woman can't be protected and respected. Nature and woman go through the experience of mothering, both nourish their offspring and take care of them. Val Plumwood asserts:

Each woman has her own relationship with nature and that there are reasons why one cannot brush aside the whole issue of a woman nature connection and that it has to remain central to feminism. Both have been mutually interiorised. (21)

Ammu is the character who suffers the most in the novel *The God of Small Things*. She suffers till her death. Ammu had to face the cruelty of her father, Pappachi who used to beat her and her mother Mammachi:

He had always been a jealous man, so he greatly resented the attention his wife was suddenly getting. He slouched about the compound in his immaculately tailored suit, weaving sullen circles around mounds of red chilies and freshly powdered... every night he beats her with a brass flower vase. The beating weren't new. What was new was only frequency with which they took place. One night Pappachi broke the bow of Mammachi's violin and threw it in the river. (48)

This shows that Pappachi is a man of ego and cruel mentality when he tyrannises his wife and daughter. Ammu was also deprived from higher education and was not allowed admission in college because, according to Pappachi, college education is not at all useful for a girl. After being divorced she was totally neglected by her parental family. It is at this stage that Ammu comes to know of her real status in her father's home:

She subscribed wholeheartedly to the commonly held view that a married daughter had no position in her parents' home. As for a divorced daughter- according to baby Kochamma, she had no

position anywhere at all. And as for divorced daughter from a love marriage, well, words could not describe baby Kochamma's outrage. (45)

Ammu also becomes the victim of her husband's atrocities whom she loved a lot. Her husband treats her as an object and offers her to satisfy his boss's sexuality to save his job. The novel shows selfish attitude of man towards woman and nature. The male characters in the novel share one common quality which is their oppression of women in one form or another. Ammu becomes puppet in the novel. Her decision to marry a wrong person becomes the cause of her suffering in the novel. In contrast, her brother Chacko not only is permitted to have lovers, he is silently encouraged to do so. Ammu is not allowed to make decisions for herself because she is a woman.

In the novel Ammu is almost always associated with the river Meenachal. Ammu suffers from patriarchy such as her brother, her husband, and the police of Ayemenem. She was repeatedly assaulted by them both verbally and physically. Ultimately, she loses her life in the battle. Like Ammu, the river Meenachal also suffers. The river Meenachal that is known for cleanness is desecrated to a polluted, foul smelling, and human excrement.

The atrocities do not stop after the death of Ammu, even her dead body has to suffer for cremation. Church refuses to cremate her body and it is cremated in an electric crematorium. Moreover, her brother Chacko wrapped her body in a dirty bedsheet and lay out on a dirty stretcher:

Chacko hired a van to transport the body to the electric crematorium. He had her wrapped in a dirty bedsheet and laid out on a stretcher. Rahel thought she looked like a Roman senator. Et tu, Ammu! She thought and smiled, remembering Estha. It was odd driving through bright, busy streets with a dead Roman senator on the floor of the van. It made the blue sky bluer... Real life was inside the van. Where real death was. (162)

Greg Garrard clearly mentions the role of animals in literature in a very comprehensive way. He says “the study of the relationship between animals and humans in the Humanities is split between philosophical consideration of animal rights and cultural analysis of the representation of animals”. *A River Sutra* illustrates the finest picture of the nonhuman world. Although Gita Mehta has not intentionally depicted any animal in the novel, but some extent she seems aware regarding other than human world. In the novel, the nameless bureaucrat attempt to build relationship with animals through looking and listening to them. But, the barriers of inability to communicate with animals or know animal minds denote the gap between human and nonhuman world. As depicted in the novel, the musician teaches his daughter and tells her to follow the harmonious rhythm of birds to get mastery over ragas. “...my father made me sit next to him in the evening as the birds were alighting on the trees” (Mehta, *A River Sutra* 203). Further, he says “listen to the birds singing. Do you hear the half notes and microtones pouring from their throats? If I practice for ten lifetimes I could not reproduce...” (203). Human being learns several things from the world of non human. The musician tells his daughter that birds sing at dawn at sunset because “of change in light. Their songs are a spontaneous response to the beauty of the world. That is true music” (203) Birds do not directly teach human beings, but their instinct quality give more to acquire from them. It shows the possibility of spiritual growth and self awareness regarding nonhuman world. The music teacher reflects his ecological sensitivity to the nonhuman world. He has a deep understanding of the nonhuman world. He describes how the notes of the raga *sa, re, ga, ma, pa, dha, ni*, can be comprehensively understood by imitating animals and birds. He says to her daughter:

Listen. Do you hear that peacock’s cry? It is first note of the scale. *Sa*... can you hear that calf calling its mother? It is note- *re*... hear the goats? If you sing *ga* three times, very quickly, it is the bleating of a goat... into the paddy field behind the herons. “*Ma*, the cry of the heron. At night, *Pa*, the song of the nightingale”. In the bazaar streets as we followed the horse carriage, “*Dha*- the neighing of a horse... can you hear that *ni* when the elephant trumpets? (204-205)

Thus, the music teacher teaches his daughter all the seven notes of the scale. Animals, birds, etc. play a key role to fascinate the narrator while wandering in the forest. His charming attitude towards the animal shows the adequate respect regarding animals and birds. In the novel, the bureaucrat encounters different animals in the forest of the Vindhya region. While walking through the jungle, he sees monkeys, squirrels and other birds:

...I admire the red blossoms shaken from the flame trees by clambering monkeys. Or I pause between the branches rooted in the soil around an immense banyan tree like pillars in an ancient temple to watch bird's nest from the squirrels streaking through the flat leaves. (43)

Besides this fascinating depiction of animal world, the novel also witnesses some problematic picture of the exploitation of animals. The exploitation of animals is nothing more than cultural practices which harm them. On the one hand the Jain monk covers his mouth to avoid total annihilation of insect he says "these masks prevent us from killing some blameless insects by sudden inhalation" (11). The Jain Monk escapes himself from violence. He says that his religious law does not allow him to harm any living being, as he says to the bureaucrat:

This may surprise you. Nonviolence. It is very tiring to be worrying all the time that you may be harming some living things. I must always look down while walking for fear that I may step on an ant. Even plucking banana becomes an act fraught with danger. Who knows what small creatures live in the leaves or trunk of a banana tree. (11)

Thus, the cultural practices of Jainism are accepting the ecological balance, these practices establish an understanding of the non human world from their religious perspective as the monk's attitude shows his positive response to the nonhuman world. His nature also shows his care about other living creatures. On the other side, it also shows the exploitation of animals to fulfil cultural needs. In the novel the Jain Monk describes the event of the procession when he becomes a monk. To perform the cultural practices Jainism seems to ignore the respective attitude towards animals which they claim to protect living things from violence. In

the procession they use elephants, camels, horses. It shows the dominance of human beings in the nonhuman world. It is totally cultural practices which allow a human being to exploit them according to his own will. In the novel the writer shows that the animals become agitated, they become the victim of exploitation: "there is pandemonium below us as the procession form. People are surging onto the field. Guards with cane sticks beat them back, fearful a panicked animal might injure someone" (21). Further, it shows deep agitation of animals toward human beings:

The elephants are becoming agitated by the riot. The elephant keepers try to control them. Striking, their heads of the great beast with iron-pronged prods until blood rolls down their ears. The elephants trumpet in rage and mobs fall back in terror of being trampled under their immense gray feet (26).

The God of Small Things also traces the picture of several small insects and animals. The picture of fish, dolphin, ants, cockroaches etc explicitly deals with the plot of the novel. While staying in Hotel Sea Queen, Ammu dreams of Dolphin. When Ammu dies, the writer depicts an image of a platoon of ants carrying a cockroach's dead body. Ants carry a cockroach steadily through the door demonstrating what should be done with cockroaches. A cock crowed in the distance and its voice separated into two: "A platoon of ants carried a dead cockroach sedately through the door, demonstrates what should be done with corpses" (162).

Arundhati Roy symbolically interlinks the connection of non human world with human world. In the novel the non human world tells the story of the characters especially upcoming incidents in their life. In the novel, Roy uses the images of the death of the animals to reflect the happening incidents in the family. On the other hand the dead animals are the victims of various human actions. Images of death are embedded in the narrative and metaphoric pattern of the novel. In the beginning, the death of bluebottles occurred in a state of illusion when they hit themselves against windowpanes and die: "dissolute bluebottle hum vacuously in the fruity air. Then they stun themselves against the clear

windowpanes and die, fatly baffled in the sun” (1). The tragic end of the life of bluebottle, encrypting this example, reflect the inability of the novel’s character to read danger and impending tragedy. In an example, a sparrow dies in Chacko’s car and nobody pays attention to escape sparrow despite the clear glass window. The invoking tale of the death of animals with intricate symbolic connections cleverly links the brutal death of Velutha, tragic death of Ammu, and shocking death of Sophie Mol. It seems like a genetic code stamped on each unfortunate destiny. On the way back to Ayemenem from Cochin airport, the family encounters with the dead elephant, electrocuted by a high tension electric wire. As they were about to reach to Ayemenem Estate, “they drove into a cabbage- green butterfly (or perhaps it drove into them)”. It was a small sign from the god of small things of the big crash to come.

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CHAPTER 4

Conclusion

Ecocriticism has given increased attention to literary representatives of nature and is sensitive to interdependencies that ground the author, character or work in the natural system. This approach shifts critical focus from social relations toward natural relationships and views the individual as a member of ecosystem. It also discusses the difference between the term green study, nature studies, and ecocriticism. The first chapter discusses that in recent times literature has a distinguished space for environmental discussion. It has shown that how ecocriticism differs from other critical approaches. It also highlights the application of the theory to study the ecocritical strands in a piece of literature. Although, it has also been a matter of debate for the certain paradigms of the theory, but there are some paradigms which help us to analyse a literary work from ecocritical perspective. Ecocriticism is not a single approach but it deals with several other related subfields such as ecofeminism, eco-marxism, deep ecology, anthropocentrism. The basics of all the different approaches have been discussed in the first chapter. The theoretical part of this dissertation has examined that there are a lot of literary works which need to be looked from the environmental perspective. Gita Mehta's *A River Sutra* and Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* has been analysed from ecocritical perspective in the present study. The study of these texts has been carried out in a comparative paradigm. The study has revealed many aspects related to environment. It has found that these two writers are not only writing for their society but their concerns are close to environment or the entire ecosphere. Reading of these two texts from ecocritical perspective has shown a web of interconnectedness of ecosystem.

This study has been a delightful aesthetic experience which has enhanced the knowledge in newly developed field of ecocriticism. The striking presence of ecoconsciousness makes the novels ecocritically valuable. Both the novels bear the witness to ecological consciousness and environmental proficiency of the writers, although, there are many differences in the background, theme, position and style of the writers. But their unique approach to environmental awareness buried the gap between them. Gita Mehta and Arundhati Roy belong to different

historical phases. Gita Mehta belongs to a reputed political family. On the other hand, Arundhati Roy belongs to the middle strata of the society. She was fully exposed to misery and deprivation. The empathy for his suffering was the chief stimulus for her fictional writing. In fact, her only fictional writing includes several autobiographical incidents of her personal experience.

Both the writers wrote their novels after the advent of the ecocritical theory, their works exhibit concerns which are considered typically ecocritical in perspective. This study has found ecocritical insights in the novels. This study deals with the functions of ecocriticism to trace the interconnectedness of all beings. It emphasises on the role of physical setting in the plot of both the novels. The emotional bond between the human and the non human members is studied in the novels. It emphasises on the importance of biosphere in shaping an individual mind, as opposed to the conventional importance given to society or the social sphere. Both the writers have focused on the impact of biosphere on its members in their novels. The study reveals that the writers have indeed given primary importance to the place or bioregion in the novels.

Both the writers belongs to the modern era of Indian English writing. Moreover, the novels are published with five years gap period. Arundhati Roy has recognized anti human face of capitalism and protested against it. Explicitly, it depends on the exploitation of man as well as nature. But the commodity culture, its offspring has today become a serious threat to the existence of nature in our time. Roy has traced greedy capitalism turns river, back water, and forest into commodities to be grabbed and owned by a greedy and privileged section of society. Roy expresses her concerns to the environmental crisis in her non fictional essays. she talks about wrath of devastation and damages to environment. Both the writers have projected their stance as ecologically conscious writers with an overtly green shade enveloping their works.

The crisis of environmental demolition has drawn the attention of many environment protectors. Since the last decades of twentieth century, the world has witnessed burgeoning of environment activism. So, these initiative steps of environment preservation need the support of strong philosophical foundation so

that it can redefine the relationship between human and non human world. Many writers have tried to include non human world in their works.

Both the writers exhort others to keep a dialectical relation with nature. Their readers cannot miss the writers' genuine concern for the plight of the different species of animals and plants. Mehta's reverence for the native Indian culture and belief in it has led to the formulation of ecocentric view. She advocates a holistic view that promotes harmony and peaceful coexistence. One of Roy's greatest achievements as a writer would be her ability to describe anything impressionistically. The description of the river Meenachal and fish in it gives us a general impression of life in sharp and clearly-defined detail. Perhaps, Roy's success as a writer rests on her ability to describe the small things in her novel. She portrays the decay of human relationship as symbolic of ecological crisis. She has cleverly reflected ecological destruction with the decay in family relationship. Crisis in the relationship of the characters and environment goes parallel in the novel.

Illustrative portrayal of the rivers in both novels marks some similarity with the representation of rivers. *A River sutra* explicitly describes the myth of the origin of the river Narmada whereas *The God of Small Things* does not deal with any mythical tales associated with the origin of the river Meenachal. Both the rivers have significant place in Indian mythology. *A River Sutra* allows its reader to know about mythological tale of the origin of the river Narmada.

The present study has also examined the representation of environmental hazards in the selected novels. Although, Gita Mehta has not explicitly depicted environmental hazard as Arundhati Roy has, but Mehta's impulses to enjoy natural beauty reflects her environmental awareness. Arundhati directly involves the consequences of pollution and intensified population in her novel. The novel clearly depicts the picture of 32 year time period. This study finds the examples of the consequence of pollution. This study focused on the burning issue of environmental degradation- a severe threat to human being as well the entire ecosystem, as depicted in the novels. Arundhati Roy deals with the theme of destruction of nature and concentrate on a different milieu. She has good experience of exploitation based on caste or class. The conflicts of discrimination

form the theme of her novel appearing within the family and within the community. Roy keenly observed the society and recognized the anti- human face of capitalism and protested against it. She linked the exploitation of man to the exploitation of nature.

In reading *A River Sutra*, and *The God of Small Things* through the ecocritical perspective, the study has presented a new interpretation of how the landscape, non human world are used to shape the stories of the novels. Both the novels represent multidimensional impacts of the river. The first is the realistic portrayal of the landscape such as rivers and villages. Both the novels focused on two sacred Indian rivers. Both the rivers have mythological connections on the basis of their origin. The river Meenachal and Narmada are the backbone of Indian water bank. Arundhati Roy and Gita Mehta portray the realistic image of the rivers. The second is human interaction with nature, and the third, the successful attempt to give voice to the muted other non human world, women. Both the novels witness the proficiency of the writers to examine the small things on the earth such as non human world, animals, insects, birds. It creates a sonic turbulence and also a musical cadence, a visual calmness and also agitation.

Gita Mehta adopts different approach than Arundhati Roy to discover the nature in her novel. The novel *A River Sutra* is a series of short stories. All the stories are linked by the same themes of love, repentance and suffering. Each story is given a different title and they are linked by sustained commentary from the narrator. The stories are told by an unnamed narrator, and they are all centered on the theme of the river Narmada which is used as an abstergent refuge for corrupted and distraught souls. It symbolises the immortality of love. The power of love to heal and also to cause tragedy forms the main theme in every story told to the narrator in this novel. There is a great deal of tragedy associated with the theme of love in the stories. All of the stories speak about the quenchless quest for intensive love in the lives of very different types of people. Some of these people find true love, while other stories paint a tragic picture of how people let themselves be. She tells the story of natural world through the personal experiences of her characters, for instance, the bureaucrat depicts the nature what he realises while dwelling on the bank of the Narmada River. On the other hand, Arundhati's depiction of non human world seems us to tell the story of the

characters. Roy uses the small things that belong to the non human world to get to know more and more about the characters.

Although Gita Mehta had no exposure to deprivation and exploitation as Roy had seen in her life, but she shared with Roy a deep sympathy for the oppressed and the suffering. Mehta belongs to a well-known Oriya family. Roy's novel underline the rigidity of caste discrimination in post independent India. She uncovers the hypocritic attitude of Syrian Christian society and condemns the society for being rigid to other section of society.

Gita Mehta's unique style of writing and theme of living harmoniously in the lap of nature reveals her to be a person not only dedicated to the Indian culture but seems dedicated to discover nature through her writing. Unlike Roy, she is not directly urging the reader to save our planet from total annihilation but through her inner sense of caring the natural world has signified her zeal to help in the amelioration of the environment. She has given detailed and innumerable description of natural world especially flora which develops on the bank of the river Narmada. Through the observation of the bureaucrat while wandering in the jungle surrounding around the region gives her personal attachment to the place. It seems that the writer has been to the place and documenting her experience of natural aesthetic. The bureaucrat encounters several flora of the region like blue convolvulus, white jasmine, orange- pink lantana, banyan tree etc. he also encounters several animals and birds enriching the regional ecological diversity. Critical appreciation of the novel *A River Sutra* from ecocritical perspective uncovers the several hidden small things which have occupied a pivotal place in the novel. Although, Gita Mehta has not experienced the diversity of the place deeply, but her illustrative depiction of the diversity of the place compel her readers to think about the beauty of the place. Her descriptive portrayal of natural beauty of the region advocates the ideology that living with nature is a state of extreme pleasure. It occurs with the bureaucrat when he rejects the metropolitan life and comes to the region to enjoy the rest of his life.

Mehta's descriptive technique has shown that animals also have emotions. In the monk's story she demonstrates that how the elephant becomes angry and agitated. The animals are capable of expressing feelings such as love, anger,

curiosity and even sympathy. By portraying the feelings of animals in such a striking way Mehta is urging people to view them in a different perspective. Arundhati Roy also recognizes the non human world in her novel. She has given credit to the marginalized section of the world.

This study uses the actual information of the river and the region. It links the geographical conditions of the regions, their climatic condition and their biodiversity. It tries to make a link between the literature and existing environmental issues. As ecocriticism emphasises the raising issues of environmental problems through the theoretical concerns, the study bears the connection of environment and literature. Both the writers have beautifully documented the environmental elements to unfold the stories of the novels. Gita Mehta recounts the view of Jainism, Hinduism and Islam to remember the sacred nature of stories of the Narmada.

This present study also examines the novels from ecofeminist perspective; it exposes the connection between women and nature. Both the writers reflect the patriarchal social injustice. In *The God of Small Things* caste and gender are inextricably linked. The oppression of women in the novels is interlinked with the oppression of nature. As ecofeminists opine that both women and nature are subjugated by the patriarchal social setup, they share the commonality on the basis of their instinctive behaviour. Women, in both the novels, have been victimised by the male oriented society. Ammu in *The God of Small Things* is the most oppressive woman. She suffers till her death. She was victimised by the society for her attempt to fulfill her necessary desires. Same thing happens with Uma in the novel *A River Sutra* when she was sold to a prostitute house where, despite of being a child, she was sexually harassed by the male and forced to give pleasure to the customers. The study finds the link between the nature and the exploitative conditions of women in the contemporary scenario. In *The God of Small Things* Ammu is linked with the river Meenachal, both suffer from the society. The river, earlier known as the holiest river of the region, has been a victim of contamination. Social and cultural attitude of the society is the existing cause of its contamination. Ammu's death also shows the irrespective patriarchal view regarding women. In both the novels we find that women are marginalized and objectified on the basis of gender discrimination. Arundhati Roy deals with the

theme of destruction of nature and concentrate on a different milieu. She has a good experience of exploitation based on caste or class. The conflicts of discrimination form the theme of her novel appearing within the family and the community. Roy keenly observed the society and recognized the anti-human face of capitalism and protested against it. She linked the exploitation of man to the exploitation of nature.

The study proves that literature can make contribution towards the awareness about environment. The biggest problem of an ecocritic is that there is a tendency to view the treat related to the environment as illusory and exaggerated. This position is neglected because people think that catastrophic events may not happen in their life time. They also ignore the problem because it doesn't happen on their watches. However, it is their moral duty to leave the future generation a world as livable as the one they inherited. So, this concern which exists only among the environmental philosophy should reach the common man. Literature's role in environmental protection can be seen as remarkable.

On the theoretical perspective, ecocriticism has not yet achieved the importance accorded to gender or postcolonial or critical race studies. Both the novels make it obvious that when we imagine even the most pristine of wilderness, the landscapes that we suppose to be free of our culture, but on closer inspection, they may turn out to be, its product. The novels express that culture is produced by human beings and all human culture resides in the natural world. We owe our very existence to its processes. *A River Sutra* and *The God of Small Things* emphasise on the binary relationship: human v/s non human, man v/s nature, culture v/s nature and man v/s animal in an anthropocentric world and have brought before us the need for each other. Nature has often shown its power by controlling manpower through natural calamities like famine, drought, tides etc. These novels bring out the inhumanity of the human world whose actions ruin the non-human world. These writings also question and confront our most popular assumptions about nature and nature writing by inviting us to take a hard look on social and environmental problems.

Through these writings Mehta and Roy intend to share the basic idea that human culture is connected to the physical world. It also states that the human view of the non-humans is tragic as human culture is affecting the natural world and in return is affected by it. The study has described people's actual life struggle for survival in *A River Sutra* and *The God of Small Things* in different contexts. Both the writers try to show how mankind and nature struggle with each other in daily life. They emphasise on environmental justice to a large extent. The logic of domination is implicit in discrimination and oppression on grounds of class as well as species and gender. The novelist makes us aware of the importance of forests in the social, historical, economic, cultural and industrial development of nation.

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