

Call for Papers

3-Day International Seminar

on

***Literature and Environment:
The Promise of Ecological Criticism***

From 26-28 March 2018

Literature and Environment: The Promise of Ecological Criticism

Ecological Criticism or to use William Rueckert's coinage 'Ecocriticism' has gained considerable currency in the last few decades, drawing the attention of academics, intellectuals, writers and scientists. Establishing a bond between literature and the natural environment, Ecocriticism envisages a creative alliance between the humanities and the sciences. Boasting of an interdisciplinary base and perspective, this field of literary studies is, in the words of its acknowledged founder Cheryll Glotfelty, 'closely related to environmentally oriented developments in philosophy and political theory'. Therefore, Ecocriticism comes across as a serious, authentic and vibrant manifestation of the rapidly changing contours of literary studies. In taking, what Glotfelty calls, 'an earth centered approach to literary studies', it focuses on the contemporary environmental crisis, the possible solutions for the alleviation of this crisis and insists on the need for humans to live in harmony with nature. It challenges the dualistic paradigm of viewing man and nature as separate and propounds a reevaluation of the readers' relationship with the environment. The strength of ecocriticism is the impressive range of frameworks which it incorporates within its fold like environmental ethics, deep ecology, eco feminism and social ecology to formulate a view of existence which can help re-examine the relationship between man and nature or even change the ways humans inhabit the earth.

The relationship between man and nature has taken a centre stage in the wake of the recent debates on the very survival of the former and sustainability of the latter. This debate is significant because of the recent developments. These being:

- Climatic anomalies taking place in different parts of the world;
- Amount of carbon dioxide increasing in the atmosphere despite flat Green House Gas (GHG) emissions;
- 2016 being declared as the hottest year on record in the post industrial revolution era;
- Most countries gripped with fear that despite mitigation strategies the 2030 target of minimizing atmospheric warming to 1.5 degree Celsius as per the Paris climate deal may not be achieved;
- The open threat of the US to withdraw from the Paris accord and thereby shirk from shouldering its responsibility as a developed nation to aid global efforts at saving the environment;
- Due to the soaring level of energy consumption, noted Physicist Stephen Hawking has prophesied the extinction of earth through its transformation into a giant fire ball;
- The tough stand taken by India for equitable responsibility being placed on all nations to adopt mitigation and adaptation strategies;

- The appalling air quality in the national capital region of Delhi causing concern for the respiratory health of the millions residing there is the result of the wanton neglect of human responsibility towards the environment;
- The intermingling of political imperatives at the expense of environmental health as witnessed in the burning of paddy crop residue by farmers and its adverse impact on atmospheric concentrations of particulate matter also brings out the human-nature conflict;
- The report of the National Green Tribunal on the destruction of Yamuna's biodiversity as a result of cultural extravaganza organized by the Art of Living Foundation and the Tribunal's declaration that the rehabilitation would take ten years at least, corroborates environmental degradation within the country
- Videos showing the disappearances of cars in swathes of foam resulting from untreated sewage flowing into the Bellandur Lake in Bangalore bring out the adverse impact of environmentally hostile urban planning;
- Closer home, the melting of Himalayan glacial ice-caps within the valley is a stark reminder of how no one remains unscathed by the all-pervading effects of climate change.

It is not that these developments were not foreseen. Several years ago, Noam Chomsky remarked, "Nature is neither an infinite source nor an infinite sink." However, today the climate change and its disastrous consequences are becoming increasingly visible in our temporal reality. Sustainability has now become the primary concern of countries as they manage to achieve the millennial developmental goals of United Nations. All this anxiety is not for aught as the human race is looking towards the possibility of its extinction in the future. If remedial measures and drastic steps are not undertaken expeditiously, a scenario where the island countries of this world may submerge killing millions of people is not a remote possibility. Similarly, water wars, inability to cultivate food grains and large scale human migration as a result of the impossibility of human habitation in tropical areas will soon become the world order.

In the light of all this, the department of English, University of Kashmir has decided to organise the seminar Literature and Environment: The Promise of Ecological Criticism to make possible a wide ranging discussion of literature and nature through the prism of ecological criticism. This seminar, we believe, assumes pivotal significance to promote environmentally responsible thinking and behaviour and calls for an integration of the sciences and the humanities. We hope it will provide a platform for an in-depth theoretical discussion of issues, and an opportunity to analyse creative writings for new connections between global, national, and local forms of environmentalist thought while identifying possibilities of practical interventions.

Areas of Study in which Papers from Contributors will be invited.

The proposed seminar hopes to address many issues including the following:

- To track the development of ecological criticism and explore its key concepts in literary texts
- To explore the figurative capacity of language in mediating our relationship with the world around us
- To examine how literary critics can productively respond to natural disasters and other material effects of environmental degradation
- To understand the relationship between Ecocriticism and other disciplines and other schools of literary criticism
- To comprehend how factors like historical period, regional location, race, gender and class mediate in the interaction between ecocriticism and the non human world
- Is ecocriticism inherently an ethical criticism that makes possible the connections between self, society, nature and text
- Does ecocriticism contribute to environmental restoration alongside philosophical, social and political movements like deep ecology and environmental ethics?

Venue: The seminar will be held at the University of Kashmir which is 10 Kms from the main city, Srinagar. Kashmir is linked through road from Jammu and up to Jammu by train, road and air. It has several low-priced flights from Jammu and Delhi. Participants are required to book their tickets well in advance so that they reach Srinagar on 25 March and leave by 29 March. Participants coming from outside Delhi/Jammu will be paid train/bus fare from their home towns to Delhi/Jammu on the production of tickets.

Foreign Delegates: Participants outside India shall be provided airfare to and from within India to Srinagar. The department will also be responsible for their accommodation in the University Guest House.

Accommodation: As far as possible, participants will be accommodated in the University Guest House and on shared basis. TA/DA to University/College teachers will be paid as per the University rules. There is no room for spouses to be accommodated. **Research Scholars** desirous of participating will have to fend for themselves.

Food: Participants will have breakfast and dinner at the Guest House itself. However, lunch will be served at the Seminar venue which will contain both vegetarian and non-vegetarian items.

Climate: Kashmir can be slightly cold in March. Outstation participants must carry warm clothing with them.

Presentations: Research papers are invited from scholars. An abstract of not more than 200 words should be sent to the seminar director, Professor Lily Want, by post or by email at lilywant@yahoo.co.in by 1 February 2018. Full papers should be emailed by 28 February 2018. No submissions will be accepted after this date. All submissions should be original having a certificate attached that the paper has not been presented in any seminar before and /or published in any journal within and outside India.

Each participant will be given 20 minutes for presentation which will be followed by discussion for about 10 minutes. Registration Fee of Rs 2000/ by way of a DD drawn in favour of the Head, Department of English must be send by post along with the full paper by 28 February 2018.

For queries write/contact:

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