

## Eco-crisis leads to the rise of Eco-consciousness

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**Abstract:** Nature and the environment play an important role in Malayalam poetry. The beauty of the landscape, which is rich in various species of flora and fauna, mighty rivers, and the shore line, adds to Kerala's vibrant culture and tradition. It demonstrates the region's ethnic diversity. Mysticism associated with the natural landscape attempts to claim its identity once more. A few writers from the area have depicted the relationship between man and nature in their writing. One of the most prevalent themes in contemporary Kerala poetry is environmental awareness. Ecological motifs, pictures, and symbols are prominently featured, giving their poetry a sense of beauty and aesthetics. In this paper, we look at how natural landscapes and myths are represented in a few river poems by two of India's most illustrious poets, K Satchidanand and G SankaraKurup, whose works strongly reflect ecological consciousness.

**Keywords:** Ecology, Ecological Consciousness, Identity

### OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The use of poetry as a medium for understanding the complex, intricate, and highly political representation of landscape experience is investigated in this study. People create empowered place identities as a result of the story-oriented and positive practise of landscape poetry, which promotes the creation of personal interaction with environmental values, attitudes, and meanings. Furthermore, it is suggested that new models of landscape education are needed to combat disempowering public discourse about youth and the environment, as well as conventional environmental education that fails to equip youth with the resources to constructively challenge it. This project utilizes a grounded theory approach to identify and analyse people's expressions of place identity through poetry. The content of the poems have been analysed to discover what environmental subjects were expressed by the poets, and what was meaningful about them for today's youth. Findings include the increased awareness of respecting nature and the nature-culture relationships in environmental experiences.

The creation of better environmental leaders is critical to solving the very real environmental challenges that we face today. The importance of a theory of landscape interaction and learning for this initiative is suggested by an analysis of these river poems. Environmental education, in other words, must evolve beyond the passive reception of knowledge about landscape ecologies and histories. Instead, the ways in which youth communicate with their surroundings must include them as active participants and contributors to political, cultural, and ecological understandings of environmental issues. The time has come when youth are allowed to participate as creators of knowledge in their own communities through poetry, they will personally and critically engage in understanding their environments in constructive ways.

Ecology has become an important subject of cross-disciplinary debate at the end of the twentieth century due to the disturbing ecological destruction. Slowly but slowly, the planet is witnessing the scale of human-caused environmental disruption. The ecological crisis has already become a global apocalyptic subject. The literary world is reacting to the global eco-crisis, realising the urgency of saving the Earth from total annihilation. Green philosophy ushered in a change in the way people thought about literature in the West. Rachel Carson's epoch-making novel, *Silent Spring*, was published in 1962. It sparked a flood of serious debates and deliberations about ecological stress, which peaked in the twentieth century. Since literature could not remain silent on the growing relevance of ecological philosophy, a new critical genre known as Ecocriticism emerged in the 1970s. Ecocriticism examines literary works from an ecological perspective.

The Corona era has made us aware that we are living in a period of profound social, cultural, ideological, and political transformation. Academicians have always been piqued by our society's evolving perspective and how it interrogates and deals with emerging ideas and trends. Malayalam literature and literati has played a crucial position in resisting the Silent Valley Hydroelectric Project (SVHP) and spreading the message of ecological conservation during the 1970s and 1980s. The cultural and literary traditions of Malayalam have always recognized and nurtured the relationship between human and natural lives. This paper explores two river poems composed, recited, and published by K Satchidanand and G SankaraKurup, examining how their poets deftly combined scientific and environmental principles with artistic, cultural, and literary traditions through such poems. The threat to the Silent Valley shocked and galvanised a large number of Malayalam authors. Never before in Kerala's socio-political past have writers shown such unity and determination in opposing the government's policies. Now is the time to duplicate this zeal and enthusiasm and bring back the lost glory of 'God's Own Country'. Now is the time to revive the past culture which is now mired in the fishing nets of pseudo-religion and sullied politics. Now is the time to revive its rivers, to bring them back to life so that

*'this dear parched earth...*

*sings the fertile songs of the ancients once again'. (K. Satchidanand: The Peasant who committed Suicide Speaks of Rivers)*

#### Origin of Eco-criticism

Literature and various forms of art have been portraying physical and the human-environment relationship since the Vedic period. The environmentalist movement, which began in the late 1800s, produced a large body of fiction and nonfiction literature focused on human understanding of nature and their evolving relationship. Eco-criticism arose from this bio-social background of unbridled capitalism, unsustainable natural resource extraction, troubling meanings and shapes of 'development,' and environmental danger. Its aim is to see how potentially informed readings of cultural texts can help not only to raise awareness but also to look at the world in new ways.

Eco-criticism is a relatively new literary field that originated in 1990. Its origins can be traced back to environmental destruction caused by human actions, and it explores and interprets man's relationship with nature, as depicted in literature. It explores the relationship between authors, texts, and the ecosphere in an

interdisciplinary analysis of interconnections between nature and culture. When academics began to collaborate on projects and environmental literature began to appear on the programmes of annual literary conferences in the mid-eighties, the field of environmental literary studies was born. In 1992, the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment (ASLE) was established. "to promote ideas and information pertaining to literature that considers the relationship between literature and the natural world." Elaborating on the scope of ecocriticism, Cheryll Glotfelty writes, "Nature per se is not the only focus of ecocritical studies. Other topics include the frontier, animal, cities, specific geographical regions, rivers, mountains, deserts, Indian technology, garbage and the body" (xxiii) Donelle Dreese provides a thorough description of ecocriticism, encompassing all aspects of the philosophy, its goals, and its scope: Ecocriticism, also known as landscape critique, focuses on previously unrecognised problems in the landscape and ecosystem.

G Sankara Kurup or Mahakavi G was an Indian poet, essayist, and literary critic who specialised in Malayalam literature. He was a professor of Malayalam at Maharaja's College. He was the first recipient of the Njanapeedam, India's highest literary honour, and is regarded as one of the greats of Malayalam poetry. From 1968 to 1972, he was a nominated member of the Rajya Sabha, and in 1967, he was awarded the Padma Bhushan, India's third highest civilian honour. He also won the Sahitya Akademi Award, the Kerala Sahitya Akademi Award, and the Soviet Land Nehru Award.

The current study aims to reveal the country's pitiful condition of rivers through the review of poems such as "The Peasant Who Committed Suicide Speaks of Rivers," and Mahakavi G's "At the River Mouth at "Vanchi," These poems are vehement criticisms of the nation's modern culture. Rivers that were once the nation's water supply flowed honey to quench people's thirst. All beings, including animals and humans, have drunk the elixir of life from those overflowing rivers. Its never-ending passion is a constant source of inspiration for all artists.

In his poem, "At the River Mouth at "Vanchi," Mahakavi. G rues the fact that Kerala was once an 'auspicious cradle' which has been reduced to a 'hearse' now. He says that Kerala is now 'broken in three', she has lost her culture:

*Gone is Kerala broken in three*

*The bow string of its culture lies loose'(44-45)*

Once upon a time, the state was rich and prosperous, now there are starving men who turn 'rotting coconut husks to golden ropes', the sea ships full of fish have been replaced with empty Chinese fishing nets. A land where the temples and mosques lay side by side has turns into a land where even the rats and snakes fight.

*"Where now snakes and rats are fighting.*

*It made restless*

*The temples the mosques the coconut groves...(68-70)"*

Mahakavi G. ends the poem on an optimistic note:

*"It was like a bouquet of coconut flowers...*

*An auspicious symbol of prosperous life"*

He has hope, that the state will become prosperous once again, once again the seas will be full of fish, once again people will live in harmony with nature and in harmony with each other.

The poem "The Peasant Who Committed Suicide Speaks of Rivers" best expresses the poet's concern for the rivers of Kerala. Kerala is known as the "Land of Rivers" because of its forty-four rivers. The state's culture thrives along these river banks, and artists represent the beauty of these rivers in the various art forms available. Kerala was once renowned for its evergreen paddy fields, which were irrigated by the water from these rivers. The state's farmers have historically relied heavily on the state's rivers for irrigation. However, as rivers become more or less extinct in modern times, the paddy's beauty has faded. The state's agricultural sector has utterly collapsed, and stories of peasant suicide have started to flood the news media on a regular basis. In this poem, Satchidanandan gives voice to one such peasant who committed suicide. The poet gives voice to the soul of a farmer who has committed suicide and meditates on the beauty of rivers in the first part of the long poem. The poem's first section is packed with enduring memories of Kerala's late rivers. The deceased farmer's soul recalls how the rivers of old offered plentiful food to the people. The river served as a nurturer for the state's children, singing them lullabies. She used her 'Breast milk' to feed her children. The poem is replete with the cultural nuances of Kerala: Kathakali, the Theyyam gods, waves of Sopana music, Mohiniyattom, Moplah songs, Pariah's dance, the All Saints Day at the church, all this signifies the fine amalgamation of socio-religious festivals and art forms in the culture of the state. This is indeed a strong message to the public of the cultural unity that the state has witnessed irrespective of the fact that which religion one follows. It is a clarion call for the disturbed mindset of today's residents of the state who have witnessed mindless violence in the name of religion or politics or any other reason, a message to learn from its rich history that unity in diversity is the norm rather than an exception.

*... River was there as divine mercy*

*In the green Kathakali mask ...*

*In the flowing forms of the Theyyam gods,*

*In the agile steps of the Pariah's dance,*

*In the wavelike petals of the Sopana music...(41-48)*

The poem recalls how the river's divinity encompassed the entire state's spirit. However, time has separated man from all of his links to nature and rivers. His greedy self, lost in the world of profit, has attached prize tags to all of nature's possessions. In narrating the dramatic shift in man's actions towards nature, the poet gives voice to the spirit of the dead peasant:

*Then the trumpeting forests*

*mowed down by the killers*

*pierced the rivers' laughter with their tusks,*

*then the sand that used to ride the water*

*with the fish and the snake*

*began to travel on the wheels of greed. (63-68)*

The poet expresses his displeasure with the fact that Kerala's rivers have become victims of the sand mafia in these lines. The destructive effects of the sand mafia could be seen all over the state's rivers. Pampa, Kabini, and Periyar, once grand rivers, have become mere rivulets. The river "Nila," which has always been a source of inspiration for poets, has become nothing more than dry land with pebbles bathing in the sunshine as a result of excessive sand looting. Despite the fact that the court has refused permission to take sand from the state's rivers due to the destructive impact it has on the rivers, the sand mafia in Kerala continues to loot the rivers with the help of the police and politicians. The death of the state's rivers has had a negative impact on peasants, as their agricultural crops have begun to die one after another. Due to a lack of irrigation water, the paddy fields, which were once the state's main attraction, have become barren. Many peasants in the agricultural sector have died as a result of crop failure in the state. Satchidanandan ends the poem by speaking for the peasant's soul, wishing to see his mother river overflowing with cool water with the blessing of nature, quenching its thirst and assisting the barren land in giving birth to healthy offspring.

Both the poets are optimistic that the glory of the land and the nearly dead rivers will be revived, one day. The concern for the environment and ecology expressed in these poems not only reflects our personal and cultural attitudes toward the environment, but it also helps to shape a formative opinion among the masses in general, and the youth in particular, about the protection of nature, environment, and ecology. The emphasis is on the notion that humans must assume responsibility for nature and the world.

The aforementioned study does not pretend to be comprehensive, as it is impossible to do in the confines of a paper; however, it adamantly asserts that we, as teachers and students, cannot neglect the undeniable fact that current environmental issues are a by-product of culture. According to historian Donald Worster:

We are facing a global crisis today, not because of how the ecosystems function but rather because of how our ethical systems function...Historians, along with literary scholars, anthropologists, and philosophers cannot do the reforming, of course, but they can help with the understanding. (1993: 27)

Values, tradition, history, point of view, and language are all topics that literary scholars and students of literature are interested in. We can make a significant contribution to environmental thinking by focusing on these areas. While reading and evaluating texts in our classes, as this study has modestly attempted to do, we should have an ecological viewpoint and emphasise how our fractured, compartmentalised, and excessively specialised way of understanding the planet has intensified the environmental crisis. As scholars of humanities, we should make a concerted effort to educate ourselves in the sciences, follow interdisciplinary approaches, learn to take responsibility for the protection and preservation of the environment and instil the same spirit in our students.

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