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Ecocriticism in Indian English Poetry: Nature, Culture, and Crisis

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Abstract

This paper examines Indian English poetry through an ecocritical lens, emphasizing close textual analysis to explore evolving representations of nature and environmental consciousness. It outlines key ecocritical concepts, including anthropocentrism, ecocentrism, the pastoral, and place, while situating the discussion within developments in ecocritical theory from William Rueckert to Cheryll Glotfelty, Lawrence Buell, and postcolonial ecocritics such as Rob Nixon. The study traces a shift from the sacred and nurturing landscapes of Toru Dutt, Sarojini Naidu, and Rabindranath Tagore to the ecological anxieties reflected in the works of Nissim Ezekiel, A. K. Ramanujan, Jayanta Mahapatra, Gieve Patel, Arun Kolatkar, Dilip Chitre, Keki N. Daruwalla, Mamang Dai, and Tamsila Ao. These poets reveal the transition from reverence for nature to concerns over environmental degradation, urban alienation, drought, and ecological exploitation. The paper argues that Indian English poetry constitutes a rich archive of ecological thought that predates formal ecocriticism while remaining deeply relevant to contemporary environmental crises, demonstrating the enduring value of close literary reading in understanding ecological imagination.

Keywords: ecocriticism; Indian English poetry; postcolonial ecocriticism; anti-pastoral; nature and culture; environmental crisis

INTRODUCTION

Indian English poetry has kept nature close to its centre from the start. From nineteenth-century elegies for garden trees to contemporary laments for dying rivers, poets writing in English from India have used the natural world to work through memory, faith, and loss. Ecocriticism supplies a vocabulary for

reading this practice closely: how does a poem represent nature, what value does it grant nonhuman life, and how has that value shifted over time? This paper applies ecocritical reading to a set of Indian English poems written between the late nineteenth century and the early twenty-first, and it keeps the poems themselves at the centre of the argument rather than treating them as illustrations of imported theory. It proceeds

in three movements. First, it defines ecocriticism and sets out its key concepts and historical development, including the postcolonial turn that makes the framework useful for Indian material. Second, it reads early poets who treat nature as nurturer, sacred presence, and muse. Third, it turns to modernist and post-independence poets whose work registers urban estrangement and a sharper ecological anxiety. Throughout, the paper argues that Indian English poetry forms a continuous archive of ecological thought, one that predates the formal discipline of ecocriticism and still has much to say about the present.

What Is Ecocriticism? Key Concepts

Ecocriticism studies the relationship between literature and the physical environment (Glotfelty and Fromm). William Rueckert coined the term in 1978, proposing that concepts from ecology, energy flow, and interdependence among them could be applied to literary texts (Rueckert). The field did not take a settled shape until the 1990s, when Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm gave it an institutional home in their co-edited anthology, *The Ecocriticism Reader*. They describe ecocriticism broadly, as the study of how literature reflects and shapes human interaction with the natural world (Glotfelty and Fromm). Lawrence Buell offered a narrower version the year before, describing ecocritical writing as literary study carried out with a commitment to environmental practice (Buell).

A handful of concepts recur across this scholarship and inform the readings that follow. Anthropocentrism names the assumption that human interests sit at the proper centre of value. Ecocentrism, its usual counterpart, grants intrinsic worth to nonhuman life and to ecological systems as wholes, and it is the standard against which a poem's treatment of a tree, a river, or an animal can be measured. The pastoral describes a mode that idealises rural or wild nature, often to comment obliquely on urban or industrial life, and ecocritics tend to

ask whether a given pastoral offers real ecological insight or simply dresses nature up for human consolation. Place matters as much as either term, not as passive backdrop but as something a poet uses to root identity and memory in a specific river, tree, or hill, so that damage to the place reads as damage to the memory it holds. Greg Garrard adds pollution, wilderness, apocalypse, dwelling, and animals to this list of recurring tropes (Garrard). Read with these concepts in hand, a poem's treatment of nature stops looking like simple description and starts to show its argument: whether it treats the natural world as backdrop, as symbol, as sacred presence, or as an agent with a claim on human attention in its own right.

Historical Development: Waves and the Postcolonial Turn

Ecocriticism has a history longer than its name. Concern for how literature represents the natural world runs through Romantic poetry and American nature writing well before Rueckert's 1978 essay, which itself went largely unused for more than a decade. Cheryll Glotfelty revived the term in 1989 at a conference of the Western Literature Association, and her 1996 anthology with Harold Fromm is usually credited with establishing ecocriticism as an academic field. Lawrence Buell's *The Environmental Imagination*, published the year before, offered the first sustained ecocritical study of a national tradition, tracing American nature writing from Thoreau onward.

Scholars often describe the field's growth as a series of waves. First-wave ecocriticism, tied to the 1990s, concentrated on nature writing and wilderness literature within a single national tradition, mostly American. Second-wave ecocriticism widened this scope around the turn of the millennium, taking in urban and industrial landscapes alongside wilderness and engaging environmental justice, ecofeminism, and postcolonial ecology, fields that connect environmental harm to social

inequality. This second wave matters most for the readings that follow, since Indian English poetry has far more to say about crowded cities, polluted rivers, and vanishing forests than about untouched wilderness.

The postcolonial strand of this second wave is most associated with Rob Nixon, whose 2011 book *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* names a kind of harm that is gradual, cumulative, and largely invisible: the slow poisoning of a water table, the incremental loss of arable land, the decades-long aftermath of a toxic spill (Nixon). Nixon argues that this kind of violence falls disproportionately on the poor of the global South, whose losses rarely make the news precisely because they unfold too slowly to count as spectacle. Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin's *Postcolonial Ecocriticism* (2010) extend this argument into literary method, reading environmental degradation in formerly colonised places as continuous with older histories of extraction, land dispossession, and unequal development. Ramachandra Guha's *The Unquiet Woods* (1989) gives this argument an Indian case in point, tracing how colonial forest policy in the Himalaya displaced customary use of timber and grazing land, and his *Ecology and Equity* (1995), written with Madhav Gadgil, shows how postcolonial development has continued to distribute environmental risk unevenly along lines of caste, class, and region.

This history matters for how the poems below are read. The early poets discussed in this paper wrote before ecocriticism existed as a discipline, and their work reflects an older, largely devotional relationship with nature shaped by Hindu, Buddhist, and other Indian cosmologies. The later poets wrote alongside a growing global environmental movement, and their poems increasingly register industrial change, urban pollution, and the loss of rural and forest land. Reading both groups through ecocriticism's later, wider frame makes the continuity and the change between them easier to see, and it is this change, poem by poem, that the rest of this paper traces in detail.

Contemporary Relevance

Ecocriticism remains urgent amid the climate crisis, biodiversity loss, and ongoing argument over the idea of the Anthropocene, the proposed epoch defined by human impact on the earth system. Scholars increasingly return to older literature for what it reveals about historical attitudes toward resource use and species loss, and to contemporary literature for its capacity to imagine adaptation and repair. In India this urgency has a specific shape: rapid urbanisation, water stress, deforestation, and a coastline and Himalayan belt already vulnerable to climate change. Indian English poetry offers a long record of these pressures, running from the elegiac tone of colonial-era poems about vanishing gardens to the sharper, more explicitly political witness found in poets from Northeast India. Reading this poetry today shows how Indian writers registered environmental change well before "environment" became a matter of international policy, and the poems examined below are best read as evidence of that long attentiveness rather than as footnotes to a Western theory.

Early Poets: Nature as Nurturer, Sacred Presence, and Muse

Toru Dutt's "Our Casuarina Tree" (1882) treats a garden tree as both a personal and a sacred presence. The poem describes a creeper wound around the tree's trunk, likened to a python, and records the birds, bees, and animals that gather in its branches ("Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan"). The tree is not simply scenery. It anchors the speaker's memory of a childhood shared with siblings who died young, and it becomes something the speaker wants to protect from time and forgetting. Critics have long noted the poem's debt to William Wordsworth's verse on the yew trees of Borrowdale, but Dutt transplants that reverence for old trees onto an Indian tree and an Indian family history. Read as an ecocritical text, the poem does something more specific than mourn: it makes the tree an ecological witness, a

living thing old enough to have watched a family form and scatter, and it asks the reader to feel the loss of the tree and the loss of the siblings as a single grief rather than two separate ones.

Sarojini Naidu's "Coromandel Fishers," from her 1905 collection *The Golden Threshold*, presents nature as sustaining kin rather than as scenery. The poem describes fishermen gathering their nets at dawn to sail into the sea, and it casts the sea, the wind, and the clouds as brothers and comrades of the fishing community, not as resources to be extracted (1879-1949). The labour of fishing here is inseparable from a felt kinship with the elements that make it possible, and the poem asks its reader to see the sea as a working partner rather than a passive backdrop for human industry. It also carries a political undertone: written during the freedom movement, its images of collective courage on the water have been read as an allegory of national awakening, so that ecological and national imagination reinforce one another.

Rabindranath Tagore's *Gitanjali*, translated into English by Tagore himself and published in 1912, offers a third model: nature as the medium of religious experience. The Nobel Prize committee awarded Tagore the 1913 Nobel Prize in Literature, the first given to an Asian writer, for the sensitive and beautiful quality of these prose poems. *Gitanjali* is organised loosely around the changing Indian seasons, with individual songs keyed to autumn festivals, the monsoon, and spring (Chaudhuri). Critics describe this pattern as a form of eco-mysticism, in which the natural world is not a symbol pointing beyond itself to God but rather the very medium through which the speaker approaches the divine. Tagore's God has no fixed image and is approached through rivers, rain, and light rather than through temple ritual alone. In this sense, *Gitanjali* extends the devotional tradition of Vaishnava poetry into a modern, English-language idiom while keeping nature at its centre, so that seasonal change

becomes a form of scripture as legible as any text.

Read together, these three poets share a broadly similar structure of feeling. Nature nurtures memory in Dutt, sustains community and labour in Naidu, and mediates the sacred in Tagore. None of the three treats nature as a mere backdrop for human drama. Even so, none of them yet registers the kind of ecological damage that later poets take up directly. Their poems belong to a period before industrial development had transformed the Indian landscape on a large scale, and their confidence in nature's benevolence and permanence stands in sharp contrast to the anxieties that surface in the poetry of the generations that followed.

Modernist and Post-Independence Poets: Urban Estrangement and Ecological Awareness

After independence in 1947, Indian English poetry shifted toward urban settings, colloquial speech, and ironic self-scrutiny. Nissim Ezekiel, often described as a founding figure of this modern voice, set much of his poetry in Bombay, and his best-known poem, "Night of the Scorpion" (1965), stages an encounter between rural superstition and rational scepticism after a scorpion stings the speaker's mother during a monsoon downpour (Ezekiel). The rain, which drives the scorpion indoors, functions as an uncontrollable natural force that exposes the helplessness of both the community and the family, while the neighbours who arrive to chant remedies and hunt for the scorpion turn the house briefly into a small, anxious ecosystem of its own. Ezekiel's poem does not moralise about ecology directly, but it registers nature as an unpredictable actor that disrupts domestic order, an early sign of the loss of easy communion with the natural world found in the earlier poets.

A. K. Ramanujan's "A River," from his 1966 collection *The Striders*, turns directly to ecological neglect. The poem describes the river Vaigai at Madurai, a city long celebrated in

Tamil poetry for its temples and its poets. Ramanujan contrasts the old and new poets who wrote admiring verses about the river in flood with the human suffering the floods actually caused, including drowned houses, a pregnant woman, and a pair of bullocks (Ramanujan). The poem's flat, almost accountant-like listing of the dead works against the lyric grandeur of the earlier poetic tradition it cites, and that friction is the point: Ramanujan criticises a literary habit that aestheticises a river while ignoring the human and ecological cost of its floods, a concern close to what later critics would call environmental justice.

Jayanta Mahapatra's *A Rain of Rites* (1976) situates ecological and spiritual imagery within the landscape of Odisha. In "Dawn at Puri," the poet describes a skull on the sacred sands, widowed women waiting to enter the Jagannath temple, and a solitary cremation pyre, all observed in the grey light of early morning by the sea (Mahapatra). The poem does not separate the human cycle of poverty, faith, and death from the physical setting of sand, sea, and shifting light; the two are intertwined, so that the coastline itself seems to hold the memory of everyone who has died beside it. Read ecocritically, Mahapatra's coastal imagery anticipates present-day anxieties about the vulnerability of India's coastline, even though the poem's immediate concern is ritual and mortality rather than environmental change as such.

Gieve Patel, a physician as well as a poet associated with India's environmental "Green Movement," wrote "On Killing a Tree" (1966) as an extended description of the labour required to destroy a tree completely: hacking the branches, which the tree can survive, and finally uprooting it, which it cannot (Patel). Patel's flat, procedural tone turns the poem into an ironic instruction manual, and many readers take it as an implicit protest against deforestation carried out casually, for convenience or profit. The poem's central insight, that a tree resists half-measures and yields only to complete violence

against its roots, has made it one of the most frequently cited ecocritical poems in Indian classrooms, and it works precisely because it withholds outrage, describing destruction in the patient, procedural voice of someone who has done this before.

Arun Kolatkar's *Jejuri* (1976), a sequence of thirty-one poems, follows a sceptical, urban visitor through a day at a Maharashtrian pilgrimage town sacred to the god Khandoba. Kolatkar sets the persistence of myth against a landscape of crumbling temples, worn rock, and a dry reservoir that holds nothing but what one poem calls the hundred years of silt left behind by a vanished spring. The image works on two levels at once: a literal record of drought and neglect, and a figure for a faith that has run dry along with the water. *Jejuri* does not simply mock devotion. It shows a sacred landscape hollowed out by casual commerce and by decades of disuse, so that the ecological decline of the place, its dry tank, its ruined shrines, its eroded stone, becomes inseparable from the erosion of the belief that once sustained it. Read alongside the poets discussed above, Kolatkar's *Jejuri* marks an early instance of the commodification of a once-sacred landscape that later poets describe more directly in industrial and urban settings.

Dilip Chitre's "The Felling of the Banyan Tree," collected in *Travelling in a Cage* (1980), narrates a specific act of destruction from the poet's childhood in Baroda. The speaker's father orders tenants off the family's land and has the surrounding trees felled to clear space, including a two-hundred-year-old banyan with a fifty-foot trunk (Chitre). The poem sets the grandmother's belief that felling trees is a sin against the father's indifferent authority, so that the destruction of the tree becomes a conflict between an older, sacralised view of nature and a modern, developmental one. The family's subsequent move from tree-filled Baroda to a Bombay without such trees frames urbanisation as a form of ecological and cultural loss, the same commodification of once-sacred land that

Guha and Gadgil describe in their history of Indian forest policy.

Keki N. Daruwalla's early collections, *Under Orion* (1970) and *Crossing of Rivers* (1976), extend this sense of a landscape under strain. Daruwalla, who served in the Indian Police Service, wrote poems that combine precise observation of Indian rivers, drought, and cremation ritual with a sceptical, often unsentimental tone. "Fire-Hymn" juxtaposes the incomplete cremation of bodies at a riverside ghat with the poet's own later grief, using fire, an element sacred in his Zoroastrian tradition, to hold together ritual, ecology, and personal loss (Daruwalla, *Under Orion*). His *Crossing of Rivers* sharpens this unease by picturing Indian rivers, so often treated as sacred and eternal in earlier poetry, as fragile and finite rather than everlasting (Daruwalla, *Crossing of Rivers*). Read through Nixon's concept of slow violence, this is less a single catastrophe than a slow depletion, the kind of damage that accumulates for decades before anyone names it a crisis.

Poets from Northeast India extend and complicate this narrative of urban estrangement. Mamang Dai, an Adi poet from Arunachal Pradesh who has also worked with the World-Wide Fund for Nature, makes nonhuman nature the central subject of her collection *River Poems* (2004). In "Small Towns and the River," she personifies a river as a living presence with its own memory, even as she records the pressure that growing towns place on it (Dai). Her poetry draws on the Adi philosophy of Donyi-Polo, which holds that human beings do not occupy the centre of creation, a worldview closer to the ecocentrism that ecocritics theorise than to the anthropocentric assumptions embedded in much of the Euro-American literary canon.

Temsula Ao, a Naga poet and ethnographer, pursued a related project across six collections published between 1988 and 2017, later gathered as *Book of Songs* (2013). Her early poetry documents the disruption of Naga

ecological and social life by deforestation, insurgency, and counter-insurgency violence, treating environmental and cultural loss as intertwined rather than separate concerns (Ao). Both Dai and Ao root their ecological vision in indigenous knowledge specific to Northeast India, extending Indian English poetry's engagement with nature beyond the mainland traditions represented by most of the poets discussed earlier in this paper.

Overall Trends, Images of Crisis, and Broader Significance

Two broad trends emerge from this survey. The first is a shift from sacralised, indigenous conceptions of nature toward its commodification under colonial and postcolonial development, the same shift that Guha and Gadgil document in their environmental history of the subcontinent. Dutt's tree, Naidu's sea, and Tagore's seasons appear as living presences owed reverence; Kolatkar's dry pilgrimage tank, Chitre's banyan tree felled to clear land for a house, and Ramanujan's exploited river mark the arrival of a more instrumental relationship with the land. The Adi and Naga worldviews recovered by Dai and Ao offer a counter-current within this trend, preserving an older intimacy with the nonhuman world even as they document its erosion by logging, hydropower, and militarisation.

The second trend is a growing sense of ecological estrangement tied to the city, the same territory that second-wave ecocriticism opened up when it moved its attention from wilderness writing to industrial and urban space. Ezekiel's Bombay poems, Chitre's move from a tree-filled Baroda to a treeless Bombay, and Daruwalla's ironic distance from the Ganga together stage a shift from rural intimacy with nature to urban and administrative distance from it.

Across these poems, recurring images of crisis stand out: waste and neglect in Ramanujan's flooded, corpse-strewn river and

Kolatkhar's silted tank, injured nonhuman life in Patel's uprooted tree and Chitre's felled banyan, and drought and depletion in Daruwalla's vision of a diminished river. Read through Nixon's idea of slow violence, these images register less as single events than as an accumulating record of damage that unfolds gradually and mostly out of sight, the same kind of harm that Guha's environmental history locates in deforestation, mining, and displacement across the subcontinent.

The broader significance of this body of work lies in what it demonstrates: that ecological concern is not a recent import into Indian literature in English. From Dutt's elegy for a garden tree to Ao's testimony to deforestation in Nagaland, Indian English poets have used the natural world to think through memory, faith, community, and loss, adapting inherited English forms to specifically Indian landscapes and cosmologies. Reading this poetry closely, poem by poem, recovers a long tradition of ecological attentiveness that a purely theoretical account would miss, and it places that tradition within a global conversation about literature's role in imagining, and perhaps repairing, the human relationship with the nonhuman world.

Methodological Reflections

A paper of this kind rests on choices that are worth examining openly rather than leaving implicit, since the choices shape what the argument can and cannot show. Four questions in particular are worth sitting with: whether the framework itself fits the material, whether breadth was the right choice against depth, whether a further critical lens would have sharpened the readings, and whether the method has left something out.

On the Risk of Imposing Western Categories

The question of fit deserves to be taken seriously rather than deflected. Ecocriticism's founding vocabulary, wilderness, ecocentrism, deep ecology, grew out of a specifically American and British literary history, and

applying it wholesale to Indian material risks smuggling in assumptions that do not belong there. Ramachandra Guha made this case as early as 1989, before ecocriticism itself was fully institutionalised as a discipline. In a widely cited critique of deep ecology, he argued that the movement's central tenets, its call to shift from anthropocentrism to biocentrism, its emphasis on wilderness preservation, and its selective invocation of Eastern philosophy as a spiritual ancestor, reflect the concerns of an already-industrialised society rather than a universal environmental ethic (Guha, "Radical American Environmentalism" 71-74). Wilderness preservation in particular means something different in a country where forests are inhabited and worked by millions of people; treating untouched nature as the highest ecological good can end up displacing the very communities whose presence in the forest is part of its ecology, not a threat to it.

This caution applies directly to the readings above. Calling Mamang Dai's or Tamsula Ao's poetry ecocentric borrows a term built to describe a Western philosophical position, one that grants nonhuman life independent moral standing, and that is not quite the same as the Adi or Naga cosmologies the poems draw on, in which land and community are kin rather than separate parties granted equal status by argument. The two ideas overlap, but they are not identical, and treating them as interchangeable smooths over a real difference in how nature is imagined. A more careful practice would use the borrowed term as a point of entry and then let the poem correct it, checking whether a given image of reverence looks more like the idealisation Western pastoral describes or more like something closer to obligation and kinship. The risk of imposition is real, but it is manageable once the critic treats imported vocabulary as a provisional tool to be tested against the poem rather than a grid the poem must be made to fit.

On Breadth versus Depth

There is a genuine trade-off here, and it is worth being honest about it rather than assuming breadth is automatically a virtue. A survey covering eleven poets, as this paper does, can show a pattern across a tradition: it can demonstrate that ecological concern runs continuously from Dutt in 1882 to Ao in the twenty-first century, and that is a claim only breadth can support. But breadth of this kind comes at a cost. Each poet here receives a paragraph or two, enough to identify one poem's central ecological image but not enough to trace how that image develops across a whole collection, interacts with a poet's syntax and line, or changes over a career. A tighter study built around three or four poets, Daruwalla and Mahapatra together, say, or Kolatkar and Ramanujan read closely against one another, could follow a single ecological image through several poems and engage far more fully with the existing criticism on each writer than a paper citing one representative poem per poet ever could.

Neither approach is simply better than the other. The survey format suits an argument about a tradition; the narrower format suits an argument about a poet or a technique. Since this paper's claim concerns continuity and change across more than a century of Indian English poetry, the broader survey is defensible, but the argument would gain in precision, if not in scope, from a narrower focus. A natural extension of this paper would take any one of its sections, the reading of Daruwalla and Kolatkar together, for instance, and expand it into a study in its own right.

On the Anti-Pastoral

This may be the sharpest of the four questions, because several of the poems already discussed do not sit comfortably under ecocentrism or sacred nature at all. They are not celebrating the natural world; they are refusing to look away from what has happened to it, which is a different move and deserves its own

name. Terry Gifford's account of pastoral supplies one. Gifford distinguishes pastoral proper, the idealisation of rural or natural life, from anti-pastoral writing, which deliberately undercuts that idealisation by showing the hardship or decay pastoral convention leaves out, and from post-pastoral writing, which tries to move past the opposition altogether (Gifford).

Several poems in this paper are anti-pastoral in exactly this sense, and naming them as such sharpens what the paper has already argued about them. Ramanujan's "A River" takes direct aim at a Tamil poetic tradition that had turned the Vaigai's floods into an occasion for lyric admiration, and it answers that tradition with a flat list of the drowned, refusing the reader any of the consolation pastoral usually offers. Kolatkar's *Jejuri* works the same way against religious rather than literary convention: it takes the pilgrimage poem, a genre built for reverence, and fills it with a dry tank, an indifferent priest, and a bored tourist. Patel's "On Killing a Tree" goes further still, offering no idealised nature to undercut in the first place, only the procedural description of its destruction. Read as anti-pastoral rather than simply as crisis writing, these poems turn out to be arguing with an earlier literary habit of describing nature reverently, and their force comes from that argument as much as from their subject matter. A crisis image on its own is a report; an anti-pastoral image is a rebuttal, and the difference is worth preserving in how the poems are read.

On Form, Rhythm, and Sound

Yes, and this paper's reliance on paraphrase, necessary given the limits on quoting the poems directly, leaves this dimension largely untouched. Jonathan Bate's *The Song of the Earth* makes the case for taking form seriously in exactly this way. Bate argues that metre itself, "a quiet but persistent music, a recurring cycle, a heartbeat," can answer to nature's own rhythms, so that a poem's formal choices, not only its images or arguments,

become part of its ecological meaning(Bate). On this view, an ecocriticism that stops at paraphrasable content, at what a poem says about a tree or a river, misses half of what the poem does.

Applied to the poets discussed above, this would mean asking different questions than the ones this paper has asked. Does Ezekiel's broken, halting syntax in "Night of the Scorpion" enact the household's panic at a formal level, not merely describe it? Does Daruwalla's heavily enjambed, unrhymed verse mimic a current that will not stay within its banks? Does Mahapatra's long, accumulating sentences in "Dawn at Puri" slow the reader's pace to match the poem's own grey, tidal patience? Kolatkar's flat, deadpan lines in Jejuri, built from short declarative statements with almost no ornament, arguably enact the very desacralisation the poem describes, a style stripped of the reverent cadence that pilgrimage poetry traditionally uses. None of these questions can be answered through summary alone, and a fuller ecocritical account of this corpus would need to sit with line breaks, metrical choices or the deliberate refusal of metre, and sound patterning, asking how those formal features reinforce or complicate the ecological argument this paper has traced mainly through imagery and theme.

CONCLUSION

This paper has traced ecocriticism's key concepts and its historical and postcolonial development, and it has used that framework to read Indian English poetry from Toru Dutt to Tamsila Ao closely and in sequence. The poets discussed here move from a devotional, sacralised vision of nature toward a harder ecological unease under urbanisation and industrial change, without ever entirely losing the older vision. What holds the paper together is not the theory but the poems themselves: the casuarina tree, the Vaigai in flood, the silted tank at Jejuri, the felled banyan, the diminished river. Their work confirms that Indian English poetry

offers a substantial and continuous resource for ecocritical study, one grounded first in close reading and only secondly in the vocabulary that reading requires. As the reflections above suggest, that vocabulary is not neutral, and a narrower study attentive to form and to the specific ethical claims of Adi, Naga, or Tamil cosmology would sharpen the picture further. What this paper offers is a first map of the terrain rather than its final survey.

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