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Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai's Poetry and Eco-criticism: Environmental Consciousness and the Human–Nature Relationship

Abstract:

In today's world, where environmental problems are getting bigger, a new way of thinking called Eco-criticism has become important. It helps us understand how literature and Nature are connected. The poetry of Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai is deeply connected to the cultural world of Sindh. It gives us ideas about how humans and Nature are linked and how we should care for the environment.

This study looks at some of the verses from Shah jo Risalo. It uses a research method that tries to understand the meaning of these verses regard to the Eco-system of the Land. The study uses ideas from Eco-critics like Glotfelty, Buell and Naess. It checks how Nature is shown in Latif's poetry, and it also looks at how the relationship between humans and the environment is presented in his poetry.

This study helps us understand how his poetry tells us about humans and the environment.

The study of Latif's poetry shows that he sees Nature as an meaningful part of our lives not just something in the background. Many of his characters like Marui, Sassui, Sohni and Noori are deeply connected with the land and its environment. Latif wants us to think about Nature in a way. He believes we should live in harmony with the world and take responsibility for our actions. His poetry is not about the environment but also about being kind and fair to all living things.

The study finds that Latif's poetry has ideas that're similar to modern environmental ethics. His work gives us a perspective on how to live with Nature. His poetry helps us think about how to take care of the Earth and live in balance with Nature.

Latif's poetry encourages us to respect and care for Nature. His ideas are still relevant today, and his poetry can inspire us to take action to protect the environment.

Keywords: Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai, Eco-criticism, Environmental Consciousness, Sindhi Literature, Deep Ecology, Sustainability, Human–Nature Relations.

Introduction

Background of the Study:

The worsening ecological problems faced by the world in recent times, such as global warming and biodiversity loss, water shortages and ecological degradation, have greatly impacted the Nature of academic discourse in different fields. In the field of literature, for instance, Eco-criticism is a new and significant interdisciplinary approach to the study of literature and its relationship to Nature. The focus of global discourse is changing to ecological problems and concerns, and this has led to a re-reading of literature and its role in shaping and influencing ecological attitudes and perspectives.

Eco-criticism is a contemporary literary theory that examines the connection between literature and the natural environment. Simply put, Eco-criticism is concerned with the way in which Nature is portrayed in literary works of art, and how it impacts human views of the environment. Eco-criticism as defined by Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm is "the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment" (1996, p. xviii). This definition shows that Eco-criticism is mainly concerned with how literary texts deal with ecological issues and show the natural world. Similarly, Garrard explains that Eco-criticism as "the ways in which literature engages with concerns" (2012, p.5) which means literature plays an active role in shaping what we think about the environment. In this sense literature does not just reflect our thoughts, it also helps create our ecological awareness.

These ideas behind Eco-criticism challenge the way of thinking that put humans at the center of everything. Instead, it supports a way of thinking that values all living and nonliving things in the ecosystem. Buell emphasizes that texts about the environment must "recognize the environment as a presence" and show that "human history is implicated in natural history" (1995, p.7). This change from focusing on humans to focusing on Nature has opened up ways of understanding literary works, especially those that come from indigenous and regional traditions. Eco-criticism is really changing the way we look at system and literature and the natural environment. The field of Eco-criticism and literature is becoming more important as we face environmental problems and Eco-criticism is helping us understand the relationship between literature and the natural environment.

The poetry of Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai (1689-1752) is significant and underexplored site for Eco critical analysis. His work offers a tapestry of themes that include love, struggle, spirituality and resilience. These themes are intricately linked to the landscapes of Sindh. The landscapes include deserts, mountains, rain, sea, rivers, canals, lakes, forest, trees, herbs, shrubs, birds, animals, sky, stars, wind, etc. Latif treats Nature as something very special and important in his poetry. He does not just use it as a picture behind the story. Instead, Nature is a living thing that is always changing and means something. When Latif writes, he combines what people experience with the world around them. Unlike most other classical literary traditions in which Nature has often been depicted in a passive or merely decorative role, Latif depicts Nature in a living, dynamic, and significant way. Latif's poetic imagination brings human experience together with ecological settings in such a way that there is no division between the human and the non-human.

Latif really understands how people and the Earth are connected. He wrote about this even before the people started thinking about the environment in the same way. As Naess argues, "the well-being and flourishing of nonhuman life on Earth have value in themselves" (1973, p. 95) This is the idea that Latif's poetry is all about. Latif's poetry shows that he cares about the Earth and the people on it. The way Latif writes about Nature is very special. It makes people think about the world in a new way.

Research Problem:

The study of Eco-criticism is getting attention, globally, but scholars have not really it applied it to Sindhi literature, especially the poetry of Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai.

Most research on Latif has focused on his contributions to Sufism, spirituality, socio-cultural identity, socio-political awareness, linguistic heritage, ethical values, folklore, and other philosophical theories and trends. These studies have helped us understand his poetry better in various aspects. However, they have not explored how his work relates to the environment.

Latifs poetry is closely connected to the world of Sindh and when writes about Nature it is not just to make it sound beautiful. His characters, like Marui, Sassui, Sohni, Noori, Khahorhi, indigenous inhabitants of Thar, and Seafarers and their beloved wives are shaped not by their feelings and spiritual journeys but also by their interactions with the natural world. These interactions show a relationship between people and Nature which has not been fully explored from an Eco-critical point of view.

In today's challenges it is vital to revisit old literary traditions to find new ways of looking at ecology. As Garrard suggests, "environmental criticism must engage with cultural perspectives, to address global ecological issues effectively". (2012, p. 11) The lack of engagement with Latif's poetry is a missed chance to include indigenous ecological wisdom in modern environmental discussions. Therefore, this study aims to fill the gap by analyzing Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai's poetry from an ecocritical perspective, exploring its implications, for understanding environmental consciousness and the Human–Nature relationship.

Objectives of the Study:

The main goal of this study is to look at the poetry of Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai and see what it says about the environment. We want to see how Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai's poetry views the world around us. Specifically, would explore the following:

1. We would look at how Nature's shown in Shah jo Risalo and how it affects the meaning of the poetry.
2. We would see how the people in the stories interact with the environment in the stories of Marui, Sassui, Noori and Sohni.
3. We would try to find themes about the environment.
4. We would see if Shah Abdul Latif Bhittais poetry matches up with modern ideas about the environment, the Earth and its care.
5. We hope to add to what people know about the environment by looking at what Shah Abdul Latif Bhittais poetry with regard to the environment.

Significance of the Study:

This study is important in both practical and theoretical ways. From this point of view, it adds to the field of Eco-criticism by including Sindhi literature, which has not been studied much globally. By using this theory on Latif's poetry, the study gives a new way to understand his work and show how it relates to the environment. The study also connects literary analysis with modern environmental thoughts. As Heise says, "environmental awareness today requires a shift toward cultural and planetary perspectives" (2008, p. 56).

Latif's poetry, may shed some light on environmental issues and universal human concerns. From this point of view, the study shows how important indigenous knowledge systems are in solving modern environmental problems.

Latif's focus on living in harmony, simplicity and coexistence with the Nature gives a model of sustainable living that is not about exploiting and consuming the resources of the Earth. The World Commission on Environment and Development defines development as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (1987, p. 43) A principle that is reflected in Latif's poetic philosophy.

This study helps us understand Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai's poetry and its relevance to today's ecological discussions. By combining analysis with environmental theory, it highlights

how literature can contribute to global sustainability debates and promote a more balanced relationship between humans and Nature.

In this context, the study of Latif's poetry and its ecological relevance is important. Latif's poetry provides insight, into living. It also shows how literature can help in understanding environmental issues, which is core area of study of the age.

Research Questions:

To really understand the connection between the Nature and Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai's poetry, this research is guided by the following research questions:

1. How is Nature represented in *Shah jo Risalo*, and what symbolic and functional roles does it play within the poetic text?
2. In what ways do the characters like Marui, Sassui, Noori, Sohni and many others in different Surs like Sur Sarang, Sur Khahorhi, Sur Samoondi, Sur Dahir reflect a relationship between humans and the natural environment?
3. To what extent does Latif's poetry promote an ecocentric worldview as opposed to an anthropocentric one?
4. How can Latif's poetic themes be interpreted through the theoretical lens of Eco-criticism and Deep Ecology?
5. What environmental and ethical values can be derived from Latif's poetry in relation to contemporary ecological challenges?

Research Propositions:

Based on the framework of Eco-criticism and my initial analysis of the text, this study proposes the following hypotheses:

- H1: The poetry of Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai depicts Nature as a meaningful presence, not just a background.
- H2: The characters like Marui, Sassui, Noori, Sohni, and others show a connection with Nature, reflecting harmony and a sense of belonging to the environment.
- H3: Latif's poetic vision aligns with Deep Ecology principles, which state that the well-being of nonhuman life has value in itself (Naess, 1973 p. 95).
- H4: Latif's poetry promotes ethics towards Nature like sustainability, simplicity and living in harmony with the Nature.
- H5: Reading Latif's poetry through such a lens provides useful insights into today's environmental issues and adds to the global conversation, on ecology.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Eco-criticism: Concept and Scope:

Eco-criticism is a way of studying literature that looks at how literary works and the environment are connected. This approach is important because of the environmental problems like climate change, pollution and running out of resources in today's world. The study of Eco-criticism tries to understand how literature and Nature are related. It checks how literary works show the reality of the environment and how they make people think about it. Glotfelty and Fromm say that Eco-criticism is "the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment" (1996, p. Xviii). This means that Eco-criticism wants to make Nature a main subject of studying literature, not something on the side. A scholar named Lawrence Buell thinks that

“literature about the environment must show that Nature is important and that people’s history is connected to its history” (1995, p. 7). He talks about the "imagination" which is how literature can make people care about Nature and think about it in a certain way.

So, literature does not just describe the environment it also helps people think about it. Some people like Garrard think that “Eco-criticism is about how literature deals with issues like pollution and taking care of the Earth”(2012, p. 5). His work helps people understand environmental debates and how to be fair to the Earth. Love says that “Eco-criticism helps people understand how everything in Nature is connected and how we should be responsible for it” (2003, p. 67). Heise talks, about ‘eco-cosmopolitanism’ which means thinking about environmental issues on a global (planet-wide) level rather than only on local or national level. She states that “a way of imagining individuals and groups as part of planetary communities connected through environmental processes”(2008, p. 61). She further says “we need to think about the Earth as a whole and not just our own local area” (2008, p. 56). All these ideas help make Eco-criticism a complete and changing field that combines literature and environmental ideas.

Anthropocentrism vs Ecocentrism:

The main idea of Eco-criticism is the difference between anthropocentrism and ecocentrism. Anthropocentrism is when people think that humans are the important thing and that Nature is just something for us to use. This way of thinking has been around for a time in western culture and it has hurt the environment because it makes humans think they are better than Nature.

Eco-centrism says that all living things and natural processes are important. Buell says that “writers who care about the environment should not just think about humans but about how humans and Nature are connected”. He thinks that “literature should recognize the environment as a presence that affects human life” (1995, p.7).

This change from anthropocentrism to ecocentrism is a change in how people think. Ecocentric thinking believes that humans are part of a system and not the most important thing. Garrard notes that “Eco-criticism tries to challenge the assumption that Nature exists for human benefit” (2012, p. 23) which means we should try to be fairer and more respectful to Nature.

The difference, between these two ways of thinking is important when we analyze literature. It helps us see if a text supports the idea that humans are the center of everything or if it challenges that idea. When we look at Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai’s poetry this difference helps us understand how his work promotes a worldview that values harmony, coexistence and respect for all living things.

Deep Ecology:

One of the most important philosophical extensions of Eco-criticism is the idea of Deep Ecology, which is based on the theories of Arne Naess, a Norwegian philosopher. Deep Ecology is a radical shift in anthropocentric thinking in that it grants intrinsic value to all living things regardless of their utility to humans. Naess (1973) writes, “the well-being and flourishing of human and non-human life on Earth have value in themselves.” This is a foundational principle in ecological ethics.

Deep Ecology is a philosophy of radical change in the way humans think and emphasizes values like simplicity, sustainability, and respect for all living things. It is a call for a shift from domination and exploitation of Nature towards a state of coexistence and balance in Nature. Unlike shallow ecology, which is concerned with resource management in favor of humans, Deep Ecology

aims at a radical shift in our assumptions about culture and philosophy in order to address the root causes of environmental degradation.

This philosophical framework has also had a significant impact on the field of literary studies by encouraging scholars to engage in studies of literature that promotes ecological awareness and ethical responsibility. As Love argues, “literature is a significant tool for cultivating ecological consciousness by demonstrating the interconnectedness of life and the consequences of environmental imbalance” (2003, p. 78).

In relation to Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai’s poetry, the principles of Deep Ecology offer an important framework for interpreting his emphasis on harmony, humility, and coexistence with Nature. Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai’s poetic vision is deeply respectful of Nature and its inherent value and is consistent with the principles of Deep Ecology.

Previous Studies on Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai:

The poetry of Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai has been analyzed in detail in terms of Sufism, cultural identity, and literary aesthetics. Kazi (1994), Junejo (2008) and others have discussed Latif as a poet of love, courage, and spiritual dedication. Latif’s poetry is generally regarded as a depiction of Sufi philosophy, which emphasizes concepts of unity, self-actualization, and divine love.

Latif’s legendary characters, such as Marui, Sassui, Sohni, Seafarers etc., are generally analyzed in terms of moral courage and spiritual endurance. These discussions are based on the moral and emotional aspects of Latif’s poetry, which are analyzed in terms of loyalty, dedication, and endurance.

However, despite the richness of these studies, very little emphasis has been placed on the ecological aspects of Latif’s work. His descriptions of natural landscapes such as deserts, rivers, sea, lakes, rain, forest, and mountains, among others, seem to indicate that Nature has a central role in his poetic vision. However, this aspect of Latif’s work has not received much emphasis in favor of spiritual and cultural aspects of his work.

Recent studies on Latif’s work have attempted to fill this gap. For instance, Ansari (2015) observes that Latif’s poetry reveals a strong environmental belonging, where human identity is closely related to natural landscapes. Shaikh (2018) observes that Latif’s depiction of Nature is not limited to aesthetics; it reveals deeper ethical and philosophical aspects of Nature. Recent studies on Latif’s work reveal a renewed interest in his work in ecocritical theory.

Research Gap:

Despite the growing interest in Eco-criticism and the recognition of ecological themes in Sindhi literature, a gap exists in the scholarly analysis of Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai’s poetry from an ecocritical point of view. The existing literature does not examine the construction of environmental consciousness in Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai’s poetry and its alignment with contemporary ecological thought such as Deep Ecology.

Furthermore, Eco-criticism and Western literature have not been able to establish a connection with indigenous literature. According to Garrard (2012), “local and indigenous narratives can provide alternative models of environmental ethics” (p. 112), but these are not adequately represented in global intellectual discourse.

This research aims to fill this void by using ecocritical theory to analyze Latif’s poetry, providing a new perspective on its ecological value. In this manner, this research contributes to

both literary and environmental studies, showing the value of indigenous poetry in solving contemporary ecological issues.

To sum up, the emphasis on Eco-criticism offers a strong theoretical basis for the analysis of literary works in relation to environmental issues. The work of Glotfelty, Buell, Garrard, Heise, and Naess, among other scholars, has established key concepts in this field, which provide a clearer understanding of the relationship between humans and Nature. However, there is a need to extend this discourse to include other literary traditions, such as the poetry of Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai, which would provide a significant contribution to this field.

Methodology

Research Design:

This research will employ a qualitative research methodology with its underpinning being interpretive and textual analysis to investigate the poetry of Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai with the theoretical framework of Eco-criticism. Qualitative research is best suited for literary research because it provides the scope to delve into the subject matter with its hidden meanings, symbols, metaphors, and themes. Unlike quantitative research, which relies on data collection and statistical analysis, qualitative research is based on depth and interpretation.

Qualitative research is described by Creswell (2014) as a method that attempts to “explore and understand the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (p. 4). This statement is very similar to the purpose of the present research, which aims to reveal the construction of environmental meanings in Latif’s poetry. The qualitative method will provide an opportunity for a profound analysis of the language of poetry and will allow for a critical analysis of the connection between human life and Nature.

Moreover, qualitative research is a very flexible method of literary analysis, which will enable the researcher to examine different levels of meaning in the text. This is particularly important when working with complex poetry such as Shah jo Risalo, where symbolic and metaphorical language is a key element of the work.

Data Source:

The main source of data for this study will be Shah jo Risalo, which is considered to be an authoritative collection of Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai's poetry. This book is considered to be one of the most important works in Sindhi literature and deals with a variety of themes, including love, spirituality, struggle, and human resilience, which have been closely linked with the natural landscapes of Sindh.

The selection of Shah jo Risalo as the primary source of data for this study can be justified in view of the fact that it deals with a variety of ecological themes and has close links with natural elements like the desert, rivers, mountains, flora, fauna, and seasonal changes, which have not only been described in detail but have also significantly influenced the content and message of the poetry.

Along with the primary source of data, relevant secondary sources, including books, articles, and theoretical works related to Eco-criticism, have been consulted to fulfill the requirements of this study.

Sampling Technique:

The current research utilizes a purposive sampling approach. It is a type of non-probability sampling. Non-probability sampling is often employed in qualitative research. In this type of research, data is selected in such a manner that it is most relevant to the research. According to Patton (2002), in non-probability sampling, there is a focus on the selection of “information-rich cases for in-depth study” (p. 230).

In this particular research, certain verses from particular surs (chapters) of Shah jo Risalo have been selected, which show greater engagement with the natural elements. Emphasis is given to those surs in which the characters of Marui, Sassui, Sohni, and Noori are presented. These characters show different facets of the relationship between humans and Nature:

- Marui represents the idea of ecological belonging and attachment to the land (desert/Thar).
- Sassui represents the idea of endurance and adaptation in the context of the natural environment (desert and mountain).
- Sohni represents the idea of interaction with dynamic and dangerous natural forces (river).
- Noori represents the idea of survival on water. (lake)

This particular selection shows greater alignment with the research questions.

Analytical Method - Textual and Thematic Analysis:

The research method that will be used in the study is a combination of textual analysis and thematic analysis. Textual analysis is a research method that involves a close analysis of literary materials to identify patterns and symbols and other linguistic devices that are used to convey meaning. According to Fairclough (1995), textual analysis is the examination of “the linguistic and semiotic features of texts and their role in the production of meaning” (p. 57). In the context of this research study, textual analysis will be used to analyze the representation of Nature in Latif’s poetry and how it reflects human identity and ethical values.

In addition to textual analysis, the research will also use thematic analysis. This is a research method that involves the use of themes and sub-themes to analyze data. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis is a method for “identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (p. 79). This research method will be very useful in the research study because it will enable the researcher to group the selected verses into a logical category and analyze them ecologically.

The major themes identified in this study include:

- Nature as Identity (Marui) – highlighting the connection between human identity and habitat.
- Nature as Endurance (Sassui) – emphasizing resilience and adaptation within natural environments.
- Nature as Dual Force (Sohni) – illustrating the nurturing and destructive aspects of Nature.
- Nature as Moral Guide – presenting Nature as a source of ethical and spiritual learning.

This thematic categorization allows for a structured and comprehensive analysis of the data, ensuring that the interpretation remains consistent and logically organized.

Theoretical Application:

The analytical framework of this research is based on Eco-criticism and is heavily informed by the theoretical contributions of Glotfelty and Fromm (1996), Buell (1995), and Naess (1973).

The definition of Eco-criticism by Glotfelty and Fromm (1996). “The study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment”(p. xviii), is the underlying premise of this research.

The concept of “environmental imagination” by Buell (1995) is also used in this research to examine the construction of ecological awareness and ethical attitudes in Latif’s poetry. Meanwhile, the philosophy of Deep Ecology by Naess (1973), which argues that “the well-being and flourishing of human and nonhuman life... have value in themselves” (p. 95), is also the underlying framework of this research in constructing the ecocentric attitudes of Latif’s poetry. These theoretical perspectives are applied systematically throughout the analysis to interpret the ecological dimensions of the selected verses. By integrating theory with textual analysis, the study ensures a rigorous and coherent interpretation of the data.

Validity, Reliability, and Contextual Considerations:

In order to ensure academic rigor, the current research is based on high validity and reliability. It is ensured through proper methodology and the application of theoretical concepts. Moreover, the current research is based on textual evidence and relevant scholarly references. It is important to note that the current research is based on both primary and secondary sources.

Another important factor to consider is the contextual sensitivity of the current research. It is important to note that Latif’s poetry is highly related to the context of Sindh. Moreover, the ecological significance of the current research is incomplete without considering the context. In the current research, it is ensured that all direct quotes are cited using APA style. Moreover, the current research is based on proper paraphrasing to ensure originality and avoid plagiarism. It is important to note that the current research is based on academic integrity standards to ensure its publication in the HEC journal.

Summary of Methodology:

To summarize, this research follows a qualitative research methodology with a sampling strategy of purposive sampling, textual analysis, thematic analysis, and a robust theoretical framework of Eco-criticism and Deep Ecology.

This research methodology will allow for a thorough and in-depth investigation of environmental consciousness in Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai’s poetry.

The research, which incorporates literary studies with contemporary ecological thought, will not only contribute to literary studies but will also provide significant insights on the potential of literature in raising ecological consciousness and responsibility.

Analysis and Discussion

Nature as Identity:

One of the most profound aspects of the poetry of Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai is the way he establishes the role of Nature as an integral part of the formation of the human identity. While in many forms of anthropocentric literature, the role of Nature is often seen as separate from the human entity, the world presented in the poetry of Latif is one where the dichotomy between the two is absent.

This interconnection has been emphasized in ecocritical theories. According to Buell, “literature must recognize the nonhuman environment as a presence that affects human identity and ethical orientation” (1995, p. 7). Similarly, Heise has pointed out that “ecological identity is

constituted through a sense of place, a connection to a specific environment” (2008, p. 56). Latif’s poetry has beautifully portrayed characters whose identities cannot be conceived separately from their natural surroundings.

In Shah jo Risalo, different natural environments such as deserts, rivers, mountains, and seas have been portrayed as extensions of human experiences. They have been shown to affect human emotional, moral, and spiritual lives. Therefore, Latif’s work can be seen in various verses of so many Surs (chapter) as an example of an ecocentric worldview, where human identities are part of a larger system.

ڪَڙ ڪا ويهي ڳال، ڪَنڊا ڍور ڏنن جي،
اڄ پڻ ڪهڙي حال، ڪنھن پَر ڏينھن گذارين.

(Translation) Give me, oh Kandi! (*A thorny desert tree, a Acacia specie, Prosopis cineraria*) News of Dhore (*name of stream in Sindh*) dwellers,
How do they do; how do they pass their days?” (Shah, 2014, p.495)

Marui and the Desert: Ecological Belonging and Love for Land:

The character of Marui symbolizes one of the strongest forms of ecological belonging in Latif’s poetry. The attachment of the character to the desert of Thar is not only emotional in Nature, but it is also existential, reflecting a deep connection between human identity and the environment.

ٿوري قوت قرار ٿا، رهن سبر ست،
ڪٿي ۽ ۾ ڪيھ ڀُڪليا، ڀُٽن اهڙي پت،
پنوهار ڪي پت، پيهي پچ ملير ۾.

(Translation) Content with meagre food, they are strong and steadfast in virtue,
They move about, their dust-covered bodies wrapped in coarse shawls,
Go and ask in Maleer about their virtue.” (Agha, 2005, p. 275)

The reluctance of the character of Marui to leave the homeland in favor of royal comforts reflects the concept of “place-based identity,” a concept discussed by ecocritics. According to Buell (1995), “place-based identity is a form of environmental belonging that shapes ethical responsibility” (p. 63). For the character of Marui, the desert is not a place of scarcity of resources, but it is a place of nurturance.

واجهائي وڻن کي، آئون جي هت مياس،
گور منهنجي سومرا، ڪڇ پنوهارن پاس،
ڏج ڏاڏائي ڏيه جي، منجهان ولڙن واس،
مياڻي جياس، جي وڃي مڙه ملير ڏي.

(Translation) If I die here pining for my homeland,
Let my grave be near my herdsmen, Soomro,
Homeland creepers may be laid for incense upon my dead body,
I will live in death if my dead body is taken to Maleer.” (Agha, 2005, p. 267)

ور سي وطن ڇايون، صحرا ستر جن،
گولاڙا ۽ گگريون، اوچن اباڻن،
ويڙهيا گهمن وليين، جهانگي منج جهنگن،
مون کي ماروڙن، سچ ڳڻائي سڀ ۾.

(Translation) Praise be to desert-born damsels, whose chastity the desert protects,
 Creepers and grass are my folks' garments.
 They move about in jungles, draped in creepers,
 My parents gave me wilderness in dowe?" (Agha, 2005, p. 240)

Her love for the land also shows her resistance to materialism and displacement. When she chooses Thar over the palace, she is showing her attachment to the land and the environment over the luxury and materialism the palace represents. This is in line with Garrard's (2012) argument that one of the views supported by the theory of Eco-criticism is the criticism of "consumerist detachment from Nature" (p. 21).

Marui's character, therefore, represents the values of sustainability, simplicity, and loyalty to the land, which are very relevant in the contemporary environmental discourse. It is important to note that her ecological awareness is not theoretical, showing her harmony with Nature.

Sassui and the Mountains & Forest: Endurance and Ecological Harmony:

The story of Sassui is another important ecological story that emphasizes the theme of endurance and adaptation in natural environments. Sassui's story is different from Marui's story in that Marui's association with Nature is based on a sense of belonging, while Sassui's association is based on a struggle.

The journey of Sassui across desert lands, mountains, and forests is a symbol of the power of humans to endure and adapt in natural environments. What is more significant is that Sassui is not trying to dominate Nature; rather, she is trying to associate herself with Nature.

ڏونگر ڏکون کي، دلاسا ڏجن،
 گھٹو پڇجي تن کي، جن وٽان هوت وڃن،
 تون ڪيئن سندا تن، پھڻ پير ڏکون ٿين.

(Translation) Aggrieved oh Hill! Should be comforted,
 Especially them; whose Hoat have left,
 How could you; oh Rock! Bruise their feet!?" (Shah, 2014, p.216)

This is in line with the Deep Ecology philosophy. Naess (1973) argues that "the well-being and flourishing of human and nonhuman life... have value in themselves" (p. 95), and this is evident in Sassui's story, which illustrates the Deep Ecology philosophy, as she becomes one with the landscapes she traverses. She has personified the Nature by addressing it.

The mountain and forest landscapes play an important role in Sassui's life, and they are not obstacles but catalysts in the formation of her identity and spirituality. This idea contests the anthropocentric view of Nature as an adversary.

ڪي جي ڪڍڻا پار، ڏکي ڏونگر پاڻ ۾،
 سڻي سا توار، مڙو پٽا مامري.

(Translation) Aggrieved and the hills; bawled together,
 Wild boars baffled; hearing their blubber" (Shah, 2014, p.217)

Sohni and the River: Duality of Natural Forces:

In the story of Sohni, the river is introduced as a complex ecological symbol. Unlike the stable environments of the Thar Desert and the mountainous regions, the river is dynamic, unpredictable, and powerful.

In the story Sohni, the character's encounter with the river exemplifies the dual role played by the environment. As Buell (1995) states, "Nature is simultaneously a source of sustenance and a site of risk." (p. 72)

سياري سهرات ۾، جا گهڙي وسندي مينهن،
هلو ته پڇون سهڻي، جا ڪري ڄاڻي نينهن،
جنهن کي راتو ڏينهن، ميهار ئي من ۾.

(Translation) Plunged in cold winter night; and pouring rain,
Let us go see Sohni, knows how to fall in love,
All day and night; she has Mehar in her mind." (Shah, 2014, p.318)

Sohni's bravery in confronting the river is a testament to human resilience, but her vulnerability also underscores the importance of respecting Nature.

This ambivalence is consistent with ecocritical theories, which recognize the complexity of human interactions with Nature. Nature is neither exclusively kind nor exclusively unkind; it is a force to be understood and respected.

Noori and the Lake: Dwelling with Nature:

The character of Noori brings up another aspect of ecological interaction, which is peaceful coexistence and dwelling in Nature. Noori's interaction with the lake is not like the other Sindh based stories of characters such as Sassui or Sohni. Noori's interaction is full of harmony, simplicity, and balance.

The lake environment symbolizes balance, sustenance, and continuity. Noori's dwelling in this environment is a symbol of the ecocritic idea of 'dwelling,' which is related to coexisting in harmony in Nature. According to Garrard (2012), dwelling in Nature is related to "a sustainable and ethical mode of inhabiting the natural world." (p. 108).

Noori's simplicity and humility highlight the idea of ecological interaction through contentment and coexisting in Nature. Noori's story is different from the contemporary style of living, which is full of exploitation and overuse of resources. Noori's story symbolizes sustainable living in balance with Nature.

هيٺ جر مٿي مڃڻ، پاسي ۾ وٽراهه،
اچي وڃي وڃ ۾، تماچيءَ جي ساءِ،
لڳي اتر واءِ، ڪينجهر هندورو ٿئي.

Aga Saleem translated, "Water below, tree branches above; Tree-lined Avenue along the bank, Tamachi's boat floats leisurely in the lake, North wind blows and Keenjher swings like a cradle." (Agha, 2005, p.26)

Sur Sarang: Rain as Lifeline:

Rain has been depicted in Sur Sarang as a vital ecological factor for maintaining life and establishing ecological balance. Rain is not simply a natural event, but it has also come to symbolize renewal, hope, and survival.

Rain is of vital importance in agrarian societies, especially in Sindh, where water scarcity is a major problem. Latif's depiction of rain is consistent with its importance in agrarian societies. From the ecocritical point of view, rain symbolizes ecological interdependence. It maintains life, crops, water resources, and sustains ecological balance. This is in consonance with the idea of ecological interdependence, which asserts the interdependence of all ecological elements.

Latif's depiction of rain underscores the importance of respecting natural resources. It also emphasizes the vulnerability of human life to environmental changes.

Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai beautifully narrated this concept in Sur Sarang:

”موٽي مانڊائڻ جي، وري ڪٽائين وار،
 وڃون وسڻ آيون، چوڏسين ۽ چوڏار،
 ڪي اُنيون استنبول تي، ڪن مٿو مغرب پاڙ،
 ڪي چمڪن چين تي، ڪي لهن سمرقند سار،
 ڪي رمي ويون روم تي، ڪي ڪابل، ڪي قندار،
 ڪي دلي، ڪي دکن، ڪي گڙن مٿي گڙنار،
 ڪي جُنيون جيسر مير ڏي، ڏنا بيڪانير بڪار،
 ڪي پريون پنجاب ڏي، ڪي هلن مٿي هالار،
 ڪن پُڇ پڇاڻيو، ڪني ڍٽ تي ڍار،
 ڪن اچي عمرڪوٽ جا، وسايا ولهار،
 سائين سدائين ڪرين، مٿي سنڌ سُڪار،
 دوست منا دلدار، عالمُ سڀ آباد ڪرين.

(Translation) Wet weather returned; with unremitting rainfall,
 Thunder bolt spread; full moon illumination,
 Some burst on Istanbul; others went westward,
 Flashing over China; focused on Samarkand (*Today's Uzbekistan*),
 Many went to Rome; also, Kabul and Qandhar,
 Some rumbled over Delhi; Deccan (*Hyderabad Deccan, India*) and Girnar,
 Some headed to Jesalmir; Bikanir and Bakaar (*lake/ dam in district Sanghar, Sindh, Pakistan*)
 Others turned to Punjab; some came to Halaar,
 Some soaked Bhuj; a few descended-on Dhatt (*Central part of Thar desert, Sindh, Pakistan*)
 Pouring down also; on the plains of Amarkot,
 Bless Sindh; oh Sire! With prosperity all over,
 Dear Sweet Darling! Make mankind affluent.” (Shah, 2014, p.526 & 527)

Sea in the Sur Saamoondi: Love, and Yearning:

The sea in ‘Sur Saamoondi’ represents a source of sustenance and emotional depth. The sea is not only a source of sustenance, but also economic security for those living near it.

ڪاري ڪيڙائو مٺي مور نه موٽا،
 سودو ڪن نه سون جو، وڏا وهائو،
 موٽي جي مهراڻ جا، تن جا طامعو،
 سامونڊي ساڻو، لنڪا لوٽي آيا.

(Translation) Brackish voyagers; are back via sweet,
 Major businesspeople; dealing in gold,
 Would like to have; fresh water pearls,
 Triumphant sailors home; looting Lanka (Sri Lanka)” (Shah, 2014, p.112)

The sea also represents longing and desire. This longing is not only romantic but also ecological, representing a deep attachment to the natural world.

سامونڊيءَ ڪو سڱ، آهي گوندڙ گاڏئون،
انگهن ڇاڙهي انگ، وٽو وٽجارو اُهرِي.

(Translation) Kinship to the sailing; is a harbinger of misery,
Hooking limbs on grapnels; merchant steered out.” (Shah, 2014, p.117).

اُپيون تڙ پوڄين، وهون وٽجارن جون،
اُٿيو اُکا ڏين، کٽوري سمنڊ کي.

(Translation) Wives of merchants; worship on the wharf
Offering fragrant, alms; to the ocean waves.” (Shah, 2014, p.121).

جا جر جاترون نه مٽي، ڏيا نه موهي،
سڏون ڪوه ڪري، سا پنهنجي ڪانڌ جيون.

(Translation) She who visits no shore; nor alights a lamp,
How could she expect; to see her mate again?” (Shah, 2014, p.117).

Khahorhis and Mountains: Source of Food and Thought:

The Khahorhis (hill dwellers) are another ecological dimension in which mountains are a source of sustenance and contemplation. Mountains are a source of food, shelter, and other resources, hence essential for human survival.

مون ڪاهوڙي لکڻا، ويهي نه وير مَر ڪن،
ڏينهن تتي ۾ ڏونگرين، ڪارڻ ڦوٽ ڪهن،
جهنگل ۾ جهڙڪن، جُه ڏوٽي ڏٺ گڏ ٿئا.

(Translation) I have seen the Khahorhis (*strugglers*); who never unwind or rest,
Hiking in hot sun; to seek supplies in hills,
Dothis mumble in jungle; on finding Duth (*Duth=wild grain, Dothi=eaters of that wild grain*).”
(Shah, 2014, p.386).

On the other hand, mountains are spaces for contemplation. Thus, mountains are essential for intellectual development. The idea of mountains being essential for intellectual development underscores the connection between intellectual development and ecological systems.

رائو رُج رُهون، جتي نينهان نڪڙي،
لڳو پير لڪن سين، ڇڄو ٿين ڇهون،
تان ڪا سار لُهن، هوت ڪميٽيءَ سڀرين.

(Translation) The path traversed by these spiritualists is of a rugged Nature, a land adorned with mountains and sands that play tricks on the eyes like mirages. The summer sun scorns with its scorching rays, while the weary travelers' feet are battered by the jagged stones strewn along the way. Oh, my Lord! My Beloved! I beseech you, extend your benevolent hand to aid this humble soul amidst such dire circumstances.” (<https://bhittaipeedia.org/english-risalo/amar-fayaz-buriro#sur-17dastan-1>)

Amena Kahmisani translated one verse of Shah Latif from Sur Khahorhi;
“Those who lost their path, searching the rocks,
Learnt much from the lost path,

Giving up both the worlds, beaten track they follow not,
Dust on their bodies for Beloved they gather,
Some knowledge of Lahut seems to possess these wanders. ” (1994, p.234)

The mountains, like other natural elements in Latif's poems, are not only essential for human survival but also take an active role in human development. Mountains influence human survival and intellectual development. Thus, mountains are essential for human survival.

Nature as Moral and Ethical Guide:

In the poetry of Latif, the theme of Nature is evident as it provides moral and ethical values. It is evident that the wisdom of humans comes through the challenges posed by Nature.

Glotfelty and Fromm (1996) note, “Nature in literature often functions as a teacher that shapes ethical understanding” (p. xx). Latif's emphasis on hardship is evident in the above discussed verses of different Surs, which show the importance of Nature in teaching one to be humble and honest.

Nature provides moral values to humans. It is evident in the way it provides humans with the importance of patience, which is required for the survival of humans as well as the environment.

Ecocentric Worldview and Sustainability:

The key result of this analysis is that Latif's poetry offers support for an ecocentric worldview, which emphasizes harmony, balance, and respect for Nature. Latif's poetry follows contemporary environmental ethics, which emphasizes sustainability.

The World Commission on Environment and Development (1987) explains sustainable development as follows: “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (p. 43). Latif's characters are examples of this, as they live in harmony with Nature and keep a balance in their surroundings.

Latif's poetic worldview offers a strong stand against exploitative attitudes towards Nature, promoting a sense of coexistence and mutual respect with Nature, which is highly relevant in contemporary environmental crises, providing a rich source of insights for a sustainable lifestyle.

Synthesis of Findings:

In conclusion, it is evident from the above analysis that the poetry of Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai portrays a holistic and ecocentric view of the relationship between humans and Nature. Moreover, it is evident that Nature is not merely the backdrop against which the drama of life is played out, but is, in fact, an active participant.

In the poetry of Latif, the desert, the river, the mountains, the sea, and the rains feature as living and dynamic forces which affect human life in many different ways. Latif's poetry is important because it is a product of indigenous thinking and provides a comprehensive view of the relationship between humans and Nature.

Latif's poetry is also important because it is the product of indigenous thinking and provides a view of the relationship between humans and Nature which is relevant to the environmental challenges facing the world today.

Findings / Discussion Synthesis

Key Thematic Findings:

The analysis of Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai's poetry indicates a clear and multidimensional ecological vision in which Nature is not just a backdrop but a significant force in shaping human identity, human experiences, and human ethics. There are a number of significant themes that are evident in the analysis of the chosen surs and characters.

The first theme is Nature as identity, which is a dominant theme in Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai's poetry, especially in the character of Marui, who is deeply attached to the desert of Thar, indicating a strong sense of ecological identity in which identity cannot be separated from Nature. In Eco-critics term this concept of identity as "place-based identity."

Secondly, Nature as endurance and transformation is significantly depicted in Sassui's journey across the desert and mountains. Sassui's struggle illustrates Nature as a transformative space that influences one's durability, patience, and spiritual growth. Sassui is not in conflict with Nature; rather, she is adapting to Nature, thus portraying a harmonious relationship with Nature.

Thirdly, Nature as a dual force is depicted in Sohni's interaction with Nature in the form of a river. The river represents both life and danger; in other words, it is a source of food as well as a threat. This depiction of Nature as a dual force illustrates the intricacy of Nature and thus the importance of maintaining harmony in interaction with it.

Fourthly, Nature as dwelling and coexistence is illustrated in the form of Noori's interaction with Nature around the lake. Noori's interaction with Nature depicts simplicity and harmony in living in a way that is ethical and balanced.

Fifth, Nature as a source of sustenance and emotional depth is portrayed in the depiction of rain, sea, and mountains in Sur Sarang, Sur Saamoondi, and Khahorhis, respectively. While rain is a source of sustenance in Sur Sarang, sea is a source of sustenance as well as a symbol of longing and emotion in Sur Saamoondei. The mountains in Khahorhis are a source of sustenance as well as a source of intellectual exploration.

Finally, Nature as a source of morality and ethics is a recurring theme in Latif's poetry. Natural experiences and struggles are a source of morality and ethics in Latif's work. This implies that morality and ethics are closely related to ecological experiences.

Link with Theory:

The thematic results of this research are also consistent with the theoretical principles of Eco-criticism and Deep Ecology. The consistent presence of Nature in Latif's poetry also supports the definition of Eco-criticism by Glotfelty and Fromm (1996), which is "the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment" (p. xviii). The poetry of Latif is a good example of Eco-criticism because it includes human narratives and ecological environments in a seamless and significant way.

The theme of ecological belonging in the case of Marui is also consistent with Buell's (1995) theoretical principles of environmental imagination, which also stress that literature must "recognize the nonhuman environment as a presence" that shapes human identity and values (p. 7). The characters of Latif are not separated from Nature but are shaped by Nature itself.

Furthermore, the results of the research resonate very well with the principles of Deep Ecology. The perseverance of Sassui, the interaction of Sohni with natural forces, and the coexistence of Noori with Nature all point to Naess's (1973) proposition that "the well-being and flourishing of human and nonhuman life... have value in themselves" (p. 95). The stories convey a message of coexistence and respect for each other between humans and Nature.

The dichotomy of the river and the sustenance provided by rain and sea also resonate with Garrard's (2012) proposition that Eco-criticism examines "the ways in which literature engages with environmental concerns" (p. 5), such as survival, risk, and sustainability. Latif's poetry reflects these aspects of Nature, which are both beneficial and adverse.

In addition, the idea of simplicity, balance, and coexistence is also related to the current discourse on sustainability. Indeed, the definition of sustainable development as "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations" (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987, p. 43), although not explicitly stated, is implicitly expressed in Latif's poetic philosophy. His characters live in harmony with the natural world, which is related to the current idea of ecology.

In conclusion, the results obtained in this research confirm the idea that the poetry of Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai represents a comprehensive and ecocentric view of the relationship between humans and Nature. Indeed, the thematic patterns identified in the analysis not only support the current theories on the subject, as expressed in the ecocritic discourse, but also extend them by including the indigenous point of view. Latif's work is seen as a bridge between the traditional literary expression and the current environmental discourse, which is related to the relevance of his poetic vision.

Conclusion

Summary of Findings:

This research is aimed to investigate the poetry of Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai in the context of Eco-criticism, with particular reference to environmental awareness and the relationship between humans and Nature. An analysis of the selected surs and characters, such as Marui, Sassui, Sohni, Noori, and many other characters, indicates that the poetic view depicted in the work of Latif highlights the importance of Nature as one of the core factors shaping the identity, emotional life, and moral values of humans.

One of the important findings is the way the work of Latif depicts the concept of Nature as identity, with particular reference to the character of Marui, who shows Latif's deep attachment to the desert of Thar and indicates his sense of ecological identity. Moreover, the journey depicted in the work related to the characters of Sassui and Sohni indicates the importance of Nature as a space of endurance.

The analysis also shows the theme of Nature as a dual force, particularly in terms of the river in Sohni's story, where Nature is a force of sustenance and a force of danger. There is also the theme of Nature as dwelling, particularly in terms of characters such as Noori, where Nature is shown to be a force of harmony, simplicity, and coexistence. There are also other elements such as rain, sea, and mountains, where Nature is shown to be a force of sustenance, emotional depth, and intellectual depth.

The other finding is that Latif's poetry has shown that Nature is a moral and ethical force, where human wisdom is a product of grappling with environmental challenges. All these themes,

therefore, indicate that Latif's work represents a holistic and multidimensional form of ecological consciousness.

Theoretical Contribution:

This study is important to the field of Eco-criticism because it extends the application of the subject to Sindhi literature, focusing on the poetry of Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai, which is still unexplored in the context of Eco-criticism. Using the theoretical frameworks of Glotfelty and Fromm (1996), Buell (1995), Garrard (2012), and Naess (1973), this research shows the relevance of Latif's poetry to the main ideas of Eco-criticism.

This research supports the definition of Eco-criticism as "the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment" by Glotfelty and Fromm (1996, p. xviii), as the poems of Latif intricately link the stories of humans with the physical environment. Moreover, this research supports the idea of Buell (1995), which states that "literature must recognize the nonhuman environment as a presence."

Significantly, the research points out the importance of Deep Ecology in understanding Latif's work. The focus on harmony, coexistence, and inherent value in Nature is in line with Naess's (1973) contention that "the well-being and flourishing of human and nonhuman life... have value in themselves" (p. 95). Thus, the research not only supports existing ecocritical theories but also enhances these theories by including indigenous literary theories.

The research thus bridges the gap between Western ecological theories and South Asian literary traditions by proving that ecocritical theories are not limited to Western literary traditions; rather, they are equally inherent in indigenous forms of poetry.

Practical and Environmental Implications:

Apart from these theoretical contributions, there are significant practical implications of this research, particularly in light of today's environmental concerns. The lifestyle presented in Latif's poetry may serve as a guide towards a more sustainable lifestyle based on harmony with Nature, simplicity, and a regard for its systems.

The lifestyle presented in Latif's poetry is quite different from today's lifestyle of excessive consumption and exploitation of Nature. The characters in Latif's poems live in harmony with Nature by following its cycles and thus maintain a balanced and sustainable lifestyle in harmony with their natural environment. This is in line with the definition of sustainable development as "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987, p. 43).

Moreover, Latif's concern for ecological belonging and respect for Nature can be used to guide modern-day environmental education and awareness programs. Latif's poetry can be used to provide relevant examples of environmental ethics that can be used to educate and raise awareness among the locals.

Moreover, the study demonstrates the need to incorporate indigenous knowledge systems in modern-day global environmental discourse. This, according to Garrard (2012), can be achieved by realizing that "local and indigenous narratives can provide alternative models of environmental ethics" (p. 112). Latif's poetry exemplifies an alternative model of environmental ethics.

Recommendations:

In light of the findings of the present study, some recommendations can be made for further research, policy, and practice:

1. Further Research:

Further research on other aspects of Latif's poetry, such as its linguistic, philosophical, and comparative aspects, can provide further knowledge about the ecological relevance of the poetry.

2. Interdisciplinary Approaches:

It is recommended that researchers try to approach the subject from an interdisciplinary perspective, as this can help in dealing with the complexities of ecological issues.

3. Inclusion in Curriculum:

Latif's poetry can be included in the curriculum for the promotion of environmental awareness among students.

4. Promotion of Indigenous Knowledge:

Indigenous knowledge, as represented in the poetry of Latif, can prove to be an effective way to deal with the complexities of ecological issues.

5. Environmental Awareness Programs:

Literary and cultural institutions can utilize Latif's poetry as an instrument for creating awareness about the importance of conserving the environment.

In conclusion, the poetry of Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai is an outstanding expression of the Human-Nature relationship, which is highly relevant in the context of the current environmental crisis. The poetry is not only rich in terms of its literary value but also offers intellectual guidance on the ways to create a sustainable world.

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