

## Mourning The Disruption In Nature's Harmony: A Comparative Study Of The Selected Poems Of Muhammad Israr Atal And William Wordsworth

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### Abstract

*Environmental Concerns find a key space in contemporary literary writings. The main aim is to draw attention towards the rapid threats and negative behaviors towards nature and environment in the wake of modern day climate disasters. Addressing this issue is a global phenomenon that is why concerns have been raised by literary writers from many parts of the world where the issue is seriously considered. In such writings we find a tone of environmental melancholia and ecological grief. In this connection, the current study aims to investigate the similarities in approaches towards the concerns about disruption in nature's harmony in the selected Pashto and English poems. The sample of the study consists of Muhammad Israr Atal's poem 'Munafiqat' translated as 'Hypocrisy' and William Wordsworth poem 'The World is Too Much with Us' from multiple ecocritical theorists such as Cheryll Glotfelty who emphasized the readers to closely investigate a particular text for the representation of natural world. Her groundbreaking book 'The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology' (1996) provides many key insights on this relationship. The ideas of Carolyn Merchant as stated in her seminal work 'The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution (1990) are also incorporated. The study also takes insights for its analysis from the works of David Harvey's work 'Spaces of Hope' (2000). The main aim of this study is to investigate the similarities in both these works towards critiquing and preserving the environmental values and thus draws attention to imminent ecological perils engulfing the world.*

**Key Words:** Ecocritical Concerns, Nature's Harmony, Pashto Poetry, English Poetry.

### Introduction:

Human relationship with his environment has been a dominant theme in literatures across the globe since the ancient times. However, with the advent of moderns global concerns such as industrialization, urbanization, climate changes, and threats of modern warfare, the concern with this subject matter has intensified across all genres of literature. Ecocriticism has provided dominant critical lenses for the analysis of such types of texts since 1980s in the USA and 1990 in the UK. With the publication of groundbreaking works such as The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology (University of Georgia Press, 1996) by Cheryll Glotfelty, The

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Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture (1995) by Lawrence Buel, Ecocriticism (2004) by Greg Garrard, Sense of Place and Sense of Planet: The Environmental Imagination of the Global (2008) by Ursula K. Heise, ecocriticism got its prominence as separate part of literary theory. In contemporary times, the conceptual frameworks from these works have been applied to literatures of different languages and countries. According to Upstone (2017), "Ecocriticism is concerned with how literature represents the environment and how this might contribute to understanding the environmental crises of the contemporary world." (p, 285).

Dr. Muhammad Israr Atal is a prominent Pashto poet of contemporary era. His poetry embodies the themes of love, peace, and national unity etc. There are also frequent references to nature and environment in this poems. His poems like; "Khudaya da ba sa Kege" translated as "Oh God! What Will Happen?"; "Khpal Kaley Pradey Khar" translated as "Native Village versus Alien City", "Akhiri Sparley" translated as "The Last Spring", "Pekhawar" translated as 'Peshawar', 'Nafarat' translated as 'Hate' are well known among Pashto literary lovers. In all these and many other of his poems, nature and environment are the prime concerns. In most of these poems the destruction and disturbance in nature's harmony is due to negative effects of war on terror and post-9/11 chaos. Similarly, According to Rahman et al. (2024) Israr Atal's poetry encompasses various themes of loss, insecurity, terror and fear. The poet feels alienated and conveys his concern in a sad and bleak tone.

William Wordsworth is the leading poet of the Romantic Era in English Literature. Nature plays the role of a healer in his poetry and that is why he is often called 'the poet of nature'. The British eco-critic, Bate (2013) said about the Romantics and their descendants that in their poetry their treatment with nature is so intimate that they are dwelling with it. According to him, it's upon the writers to write about the man alienation from nature and articulate the connection between man and nature that is their dwelling. Similarly, according to Kumari and Ray (2024), "nature is the source of love, joy, soothing, happiness, healing power, togetherness, peace, and knowledge in Wordsworth's poetry." (p, 5384). Many of Wordsworth's poems such as "Lines Written in Early Spring" (1798), "The Tables Turned" (1798), "Tintern Abby" (1798) "My Heart Leaps Up" (1802), "The Prelude" (1850) encapsulate the spirit of his nature poetry.

### **Research Objectives:**

The main objectives of this study are:

1. To draw parallels in the eco-critical concerns in the selected poems of Israr Atal and William Wordsworth.
2. To investigate the reactions of both the poets towards the disruption in nature's harmony.

### **Research Questions:**

1. What are the parallels in aspects related to ecocriticism in "Munafiqat" translated as "Hypocrisy" and "The World is Too Much with Us"?
2. How both the poets; i.e., Israr Atal and William Wordsworth react to the disruption in Nature's harmony?

### **Literature Review**

Ecocriticism is a recent development in literary theory. Although its roots go back to the 1970s, however, until 1970s on literary studies there was little impact of environmental concerns. Ecocriticism as a separate field emerged in the mid-1980s and was developed and prospered in the early 1990s. In England, it was also known by the names of "green criticism", "green

studies". With the publication of two seminal works, *The Ecocriticism Reader* edited by Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm and *Environmental Imagination* by Lawrence Buell, the term "ecocriticism" first officially came into prominence. In its definition, ecocriticism mainly focuses the relationship of a text with the environment and surroundings of human beings whether this relationship be with the material things and also the living beings in the environment. In the words of Buell (2005), "Ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the environment conducted in a spirit of commitment to environmentalist praxis" (Buell, 2005, p.430). Further, according to Iqbal et al. (2022), "Ecocriticism refers to the literary studies, investigating the interrelatedness of human and non-human environment presented in the literary text" (p.2). Now any piece of literature may be categorized as Eco critical piece of writing in which nature is used as an instrument with purpose of delivering a message to the reader (Sultana & Saleem, 2016). Moreover, according to Peter Barry:

For the eco-critics, nature really exists, out there beyond ourselves, not needing to be ironized as a concept by enclosure within knowing inverted commas, but actually presents as an entity which affects us, and which we can affect, perhaps fatally, if we mistreat it. Nature, then, isn't reducible to a concept which we conceive as a part of our cultural practice. (Barry, 2017, p. 252).

William Wordsworth's poetry has been analyzed from the critical lenses adopted from various eco-critics. Ramazani and Bazregarzadeh (2014) in their study evaluated Wordsworth's selected poems in the context of eco-criticism. The study provides key insights about Wordsworth's cautious view about the mutual dependence of man and nature. The research suggests that in the vast ecosystem, Wordsworth's pre-ecological poetry provides new lens to the modern man. Modern man is surrounded by fragmentation and illusory shadow of reality and technology and through nature he can witness the mutual dependence and interconnectedness with nature.

Similarly, Sultana and Saleem (2016) analyzed Wordsworth's poetry in the light of eco-criticism that indicates Wordsworth as a spiritual thinker along with ecological activist of his time. His poetry portrays ecological concerns. The study highlights the fact that when nature is undisturbed, it is balanced and harmonious. Further, the nature plays multiple roles in Wordsworth's poetry. These roles include the role of being a teacher, companion, mother and even god.

Moreover, Alvi et al. (2019) investigated an eco-critical relationship between man and nature by comparing the poetry of two nature poets that is William Wordsworth and Ghulam Sarwar Yousaf. They illustrate that the poetry of both poets comprises of elements that strengthen the harmonic bond between man and nature and convey an ecological consciousness.

Further, Hasan and Muhamad (2020) examined nature and environment in the selected poems of William Wordsworth from an eco-critical perspective. They find out that William Words wrote about nature and tried to inform human being to protect nature and environment from pollution and destruction because nature along with beauty have the power to serve us physically and psychologically.

In last, Jakhani and Shaikh (2024) conducted a study in the context of ecocriticism using the concept of imagery in the poem *My Heart Leaps Up* (1802) by William Wordsworth. They point out that various forms of imagery such as visual, auditory, tactile and gustatory are used in this poem. Along with its various eco-critical concepts such as biocentrism, anthropocentrism, eco-feminism, and deep ecology are also reflected by the use of imagery.

Pashto literature and especially poetry has been investigated by a few researchers for Eco critical concerns in the recent times. Iqbal et al. (2022) conducted a study from an Eco-critical and stylistic perspective using the concepts of symbiotic interconnectedness and ecological consciousness on the contemporary renowned Pakistani Pashto poet Abdul Ghani Khan in order to explore the harmonic bond between man and nature and their interdependence in his poetry. From an eco-critical perspective, the poetry of Abdul Ghani Khan is categorized into three categories that is physical, intellectual and mystical poetry. The stylistic techniques used by the poet include: visual and auditory imageries, figurative language, free verse and symbolism.

Similarly, Ali (2018) carried out a comparative study of prominent Pashto poet Ghani Khan and English romantic poet William Wordsworth and find out that though both poets were from different continents, have different social and moral background, speaking different languages, but have a lot of similarities that is the approach of both poets toward nature was mystical, spiritual and philosophical.

Moreover, Nafees and Butt (2017) in their eco-centric study compare Ghani Kham poem "CHENGI (Insects)" and Silent Spring of Rachel Carson in which both writers agree on the fact that the harmony of the ecosystem is disrupted after the introduction of pesticides and have recorded their concerns over the excessive use of pesticides.

Further, Ali et al. (2024) in their study compare the poems of Ghani Khan's "Zama Mahal" and Coleridge's "Kubla Khan" in which they find out that both poets have similarities and contrasts in the themes of both poems. There are similarities in the themes of nature, escapism, and beauty. The contrastive themes included mysticism in "Zama Mahal" and violence in "Kubla Khan."

In last, Khalil and Ullah (2023) conducted a study from an ecocriticism perspective using eco-naming concept in Pashto language literature. They revealed that Pashto language have deep connection with nature and have positive contribution toward nature preservation by giving human like soul to endangered species of nature.

### **Research Design and Methodology:**

The current research is qualitative in nature and deals with the topic through textual and close reading techniques. The research sample consists of selected lines and stanzas from both the poems, i.e., Muhammad Israr Atal's poem 'Munafiqat' translated as 'Hypocrisy' and William Wordsworth's poem 'The World is Too Much With Us'. Techniques of comparative analysis are also employed in order to probe the common approaches of both the poets towards nature and environment. Similarly, the concerns of both the authors regarding natural and environmental deterioration have been introspectively analyzed. For this purpose, the researchers closely investigated the aforementioned poems for eco-critical concerns through a careful reading of various symbols, metaphors, and motifs.

The theoretical framework of this study is adopted from multiple eco-critical theorists such as Cheryll Glotfelty who emphasized the readers to closely investigate a particular text for the representation of natural world. Her groundbreaking book 'The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology' (1996) provides many key insights on this relationship. The ideas of Carolyn Merchant as stated in her seminal work 'The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution (1990) are also incorporated. The study also takes insights for its analysis from the works of David Harvey's work 'Spaces of Hope' (2000). The work sheds light on the responsibilities of individuals for a harmonious transformation of nature and environment on the face of various challenges. The main objective of the current

study is to highlight that how both these poets have shown a similar concerns regarding the natural and environmental disruptions.

#### **Data Analysis and Discussion:**

A careful investigation of the sample of this research shows that eco-critical concerns find a key space in both poems. These concerns have many similarities that emphasize the point that nature and environment is not the concern of only one region or country but a universal challenge which needs to be negotiated on priority basis.

#### **Demonizing Urbanization, Materialism, and Consumerism:**

Urbanization in recent times has caused drastic changes in the nature's harmony. It not only affects the climate but also biosphere, land and water resources. The dangers of the negative effects of urbanization have been reflected in many genres of literature as Glotfelty (1996) insists "In an increasingly urban society, nature writing plays a vital role in teaching us to value the natural world." (xxiii). Materialistic attitude on the other hand also aggravate the environment and nature. Too much attachment with the material gains weaken the environmental and natural values.

Both the poets raise their concerns for such issues as Wordsworth says in his poem:

The world is too much with us; late and soon,  
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers; —  
Little we see in Nature that is ours;  
(Wordsworth)

The poet talks about the busy and materialistic lifestyle of cities where man utilizes his energies only on worldly gains. Earning and spending or consuming things is the only objective. On the other hand, nature is given less attention as a result of such a busy life. In the words of Glotfelty (1996) "with the population explosion, the carcinoma of plan less urbanism, the now geological deposits of sewage and garbage, surely no creature other than man has ever managed to foul its nest in such short order." (p.5). In his poem 'Munafiqat or Hypocrisy' Israr Atal also refers to this fact:

دا په پيسو ورځې شپې  
دا کارخاني که بنگلي  
دا که د خښتو بتي  
او که د گيس لمبي دي  
دا که لوگي که تارکول  
دا څه چي دي دغه ټول  
زما فطرت نه مني

Translation:

Spending days and nights, only for the pursuit of earnings,  
These industries and bungalows,  
Or brick-kilns,  
Or gas produced blazes,  
Smoke and charcoals:  
All of these, are against my nature;  
(Atal)

Like Wordsworth, Israr Atal also expresses his concern over the material things which is only the pursuit of earning and the quest for possessions. He also refers to industrialization and urbanization which are directly associated with various types of pollution. So, both the poets express their concern for giving more importance to worldly possessions which are closely linked with urbanization and industrialization.

#### **Environmental Degradation: Mourning the Loss**

Many human activities are responsible for environmental degradation in modern times. The modern materialized and mechanized order has led man towards an alienation and detachment from the mother nature as Merchant (1990) argues "Mechanistic assumptions about nature push us increasingly in the directions of artificial environments, mechanized control over more and more aspects of human life and a loss of the quality of life itself." (p.278). Literary writers have often shown their grief and despair over such damage to the natural world. Human greed is metaphorically and symbolically criticized. This is quite prevalent from the following lines from Wordsworth's poem:

Little we see in Nature that is ours;  
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!  
(Wordsworth)

The use of the possessive 'ours' clearly indicates the writer's sense of belonging towards nature. He is also seriously concerned about the approach of those who lost their ability to give it importance. In the second line, he calls this approach as avid and greedy. The use of oxymoron 'sordid boon' clearly refers to this avarice. Atal also adopts similar approach while referring to the disturbance in nature's harmony by the greedy behaviour of humans:

که دغه ښار جوړیږي  
او دا بازار غوړیږي  
تهذيب يې وده کوي  
نصيب يې وده کوي  
نو زه يې شر گنمه  
زه يې اشر گنمه  
زه يې محشر گنمه

Translation:

The building of that city,  
And the expansion of the market,  
They call it the development of civilization,  
A success of fortune,  
I consider it an evil act,  
A bad outcome,  
And a calamity, or a disastrous destiny.  
(Atal)

The poet here refers to the greedy nature of man. Instead of finding tranquillity in nature, man is happily involved in seeking sources of possessions and fortunes. The poet is clearly not happy with this behaviour as the beauty of nature is deteriorated in this process.

### **Highlighting Eco-Critical Concerns through the Glorification of Nature:**

Although many people show their indifference towards nature, but at the same time there are also those who are worried about natural environment. Preserving the beauty and harmony of nature is a collective responsibility as Glotfelty (1996) asserts, "The conceptual and practical problem is to find the grounds upon which the two communities-the human, the natural-can coexist, cooperate, and flourish in the biosphere." (p.107). Harvey (2000) also emphasize the same point "we are now obliged-by our own 'achievements'-to work out in the imagination as well as through discursive debates our individual and collective responsibilities" (Harvey, 2000, p. 213). Literary writers are often to conscious to attract attention to this collective responsibility as Wordsworth says in his poem:

This Sea that bares her bosom to the moon;  
The winds that will be howling at all hours,  
And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers;  
For this, for everything, we are out of tune;  
It moves us not.

(Wordsworth)

The poet highlights the glories of nature that unfortunately some people are missing out on. We are unable to pay attention to the beauties of nature which has a soothing and relaxing ability. The imagery and personification used in the above lines reveals that the poet is sorrowful about the man's indifference towards nature and sees this attitude with despair. The last line in the above selection emphasize some action on the part of everyone who practice such indifference. Atal also highlights this concern through the glorification of nature:

زه چي په څه مئین يم  
زما چي څه خوبنيري  
هغه فطرت دي زما  
دغه جنت دي زما  
زما فطرت خوبنيري

د دنگو غرونو غوندي  
د ځنگلونو غوندي  
د نښترو نو غوندي  
د چنارونو غوندي

....  
څه عجيبه سري يم  
بيا هم په ښار کښي ووسم

Translation:

Nature is what I like and love,  
My Paradise,  
I love only nature

Like the high mountains,  
Green forests,  
The pines,  
And the maples

....  
But I am a strange human,  
As I still leave in city.

(Atal)

Despite the beauty of nature man still prefers the city because man is so caught is worldly wealth and the quest for more. The poet reminds these sort of people to return to nature for comfort rather than ignoring it. So both poets try to highlight the environmental concerns through the glorification of nature.

### **Environmental Consciousness and the Urge for Transformation of Behaviours:**

The ultimate message in these poems is that humans should establish a close connection with nature and environment rather than feeling alienated. In this connection Harvey (2000) emphasizes,

No one can hope to change the world without changing themselves. The negotiation that always lies at the basis of all architectural and political practices is, therefore, between persons seeking to change each other and the world, as well as themselves. (Harvey, 2000, p. 235).

In both of these poems, the choice of diction reveals the poets' desperate desire for the change and transformation. For example, the very title of Wordsworth poem 'The World is Too Much with Us' symbolically refers to the humankind's relationship to nature in terms of loss. Similarly, the title of Atal's poem 'Munafiqat' translated as 'Hypocrisy' also refers to the humankind's avarice in terms of worldly processions. In order to give a message for a positive

transformation, both the poets symbolically refer to religious values that most people consider sacred. For instance, let us consider the following lines from Wordsworth's poem:

Great God! I'd rather be  
A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn;  
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,  
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;  
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;  
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn.

Using the words 'Great God!' reveals that the speaker is a firm believer yet he would like to sacrifice his own creed for the sake of nature with an outworn one creed. The use of allusion to the ancient Greek gods is only for the sake of having glimpse of these wonderful natural scenes. Israr Atal also makes use of the same language. The poem starts,

خه عجيبه سري يم  
خه عجيبه انسان يم  
خه عجيبه مسلمان

.....

وايم ---  
دا بنار دي ورك شي  
خه عجيبه سري يم  
بيا هم په بنار كيني ووسم

Translation:

Strangeness in my behavior,  
As a man,  
As a human being,  
And as a Muslim,

....

I say,  
Why not to abandon this city,  
But I still live in this city,

....

These lines refer to the hypocrite nature of humans. In Islam, hypocrisy is a serious sin and crime. Through this religious association the poet is desperate to present his effort of environmental consciousness.

### **Conclusion:**

Nature and environment are held at high esteem in the poetry of both poets. The analyses show that there are many similarities in themes and techniques of both the poets in order to highlight their concerns about the threats to nature. This clearly testifies the fact that environment and natural concerns are neither region nor nation bounds but universal. In both poems there is a message of awareness and connectedness towards nature and a common message of return to nature. Through the glorification of the beauties of nature, the poets try to convey their ultimate message of peace and harmony in relation to nature.

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