

# CHAPTER I

## AMERICAN TRANSCENDENTALISM: LITERARY EPOCH WITH BIOCENTRIC IDEALS

American transcendentalism is an American literary and philosophical movement of the second quarter of the nineteenth century that efforts to develop human motivations in relation to nature. It opposes eighteenth century skeptical and empirical philosophy of John Locke. It promotes one to turn to nature, seated both outside and inside. It teaches that "the human mind has a knowledge of its own, independent of the senses or of the material world; that certain ideas ... are innate in the soul, and that such ideas tran-scend or go beyond experience" (McLauhlin 17). American transcendentalism finds so much connection between outside and inside nature.

Significantly, similar is the case with ecocriticism, a nature oriented literary and critical approach that emerged during 1970s and 1980s. It worries on human exploitation to nature and its adverse effects to nature and human beings. It blames anthropocentric world view for this. It does not see possibility of harmony in human beings unless harmony of nature is kept. Hence its major effort is to replace the existed anthropocentric world view with non-anthropocentric or biocentric one. It has been one of the major literary and critical theories of the present time.

However, practitioners of ecocriticism have felt some unease in their practical field regarding theoretical and methodological guidance. For instance, Scott Slovic thinks that there is "no single, dominant world-view guiding ecocritical practice –no single strategy at work from example to example of ecocritical writing or teaching" (160). Such a feeling of theoretical and methodological gap in the practitioners of ecocriticism is the problem of the dissertation. As ecocriticism takes all organisms

including human beings “equal in intrinsic worth” (Bill Devall and George Sessions 202), there is high possibility for the creation of harmony in human beings and nature from it. Thus problems of theoretical and methodological gap in ecocriticism must and can be resolved. Whole effort of this dissertation is made just for this.

As both American transcendentalism and ecocriticism are oriented to nature, the research aims to capture dominant features of the former and thereby probe that the latter could make some use of them for its development, especially in the matter of fulfilling the theoretical and methodological gap. Thus, taking ecocriticism as the major methodological orientation, the objective of this work is to compare and critique how much American transcendental focus on human and nature relationship correspond with that of ecocriticism and see if ecocriticism could get some clues to develop itself. The study has made following three key specific objectives, which guide contextual, conceptual, and methodological structure of the study:

- To explore dominant features of American transcendental literature regarding human and nature relationship.
- To explore to what extent ecocritical features match with the features of American transcendental literature related to human and nature relationship.
- To see if ecocriticism could relate some discursive ideas from American transcendental literature to develop itself.

However, these three objectives have not been studied by giving them separate chapters. Answers to these objectives can be read from the overall debate dispersed in the chapters.

Following three research questions have been devised to meet these objectives. And answer of each question has been studied in separate chapters. The research questions are:

- How do American transcendentalists and ecocritics treat nature in relation to spirituality?
- How do American transcendentalists and ecocritics view human beings in relation to nature?
- What kind of human values and behavior do American transcendentalists and ecocritics seek to develop in relation to human and nature relationship?

Hypothesis of the dissertation thus is that American transcendentalism has three basic concentrations regarding human and nature relationship. First, it takes nature as the manifestation of the universal soul. Second, for it human being is analogous to nature. And, third, it takes nature as the source of human motivations to make human conducts proportionate to nature. Subsequent proposition is that features of ecocriticism in relation to human and nature relationship are significantly close to that of the principles of American transcendentalism. Like American transcendentalism, ecocriticism takes human being similar to nature. Similarly, like the former, it proposes nature friendly human conduct. It also conceptualizes the earth as the higher organism, which is close to the American transcendental concept of the spiritual representation of nature. Comparatively American transcendentalism appears to be far more poetically intense than ecocriticism in showing human and nature affinity. Thus a further suggestive critique is that ecocriticism could internalize and apply the sensitivities of literary discourses of nature of American transcendentalism, no matter with some modifications. The sharing and merging pragmatics of ecocriticism with both moral and aesthetic consideration of nature oriented ideas of American transcendentalism would help it emerge as one of the fully developed literary and critical approaches.

The research has certain limitations. Whole transcendental literature has not been studied. Only three books of three American transcendental writers have been selected. They are Ralph Waldo Emerson's *Nature*, Henry David Thoreau's *Walden* and Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*. And their views on human and nature relationship has been focused in the study. These writers and books have been selected not only because they are major writers and books of American transcendentalism, but also because they represent distinct principles of American transcendental literature. For instance, spirituality of nature is the major theme of *Nature*; human being's analogous relationship with nature is the central focus of *Walden*; and love and freedom as the natural human qualities is dominant with *Leaves of Grass*. Relevant references have been taken from their other works, from other transcendental writers, from ecocritical texts, and also from other critical theories.

It is Emerson who first presents nature oriented views that became guidelines to American transcendentalism. He not only questions existed notions regarding the source of knowledge but also hints a glimpse of a new age. Almost as the epitaph of the new movement known as American transcendentalism, Emerson pours in the "Introduction" of *Nature*, "Embosomed for a season in nature, whose floods of life stream around and through us, and invite us by the powers they supply, to action proportioned to nature, why should we grope among the dry bones of the past, or put the living generation into masquerade out of its faded wardrobe?" (496-97). In these introductory words, Emerson shows that human beings are dependent on nature not only for their survival but also for knowledge. He finds in nature an invitation to human beings to make their actions proportionate to it. He takes it positively and views that there is no necessary to be dependent on the "dry bones of the past." What he means to say is that one does not need to be dependent on the past looking

philosophies for human motivations. He does not look to the rigid past but to nature oriented liberal future.

There are mainly two modes of viewing nature. These are in terms of human relation with nature: whether human being is viewed as separate from or involved in nature. Thus one mode of viewing nature is anthropocentrism, which takes human being separate or higher in order. In this mode, nature is understood everything which is not related to human beings and their artifact of any sort. In this sense, “‘nature’ is opposed to culture, to history, to convention, to what is artificially worked or produced, in sort, to everything which is defining of the order of humanity” (Kate Soper 267). And hence it gives human being a license to use nature as they please. Though existed in practice for thousands of years, it has been a dominant view since the Enlightenment movement which “sought to realize the inherent dignity of the individual as a self-motivating rational and moral being” (Soper 274). By taking license from Christian manuscripts, scholastic philosophy took human being as to serve God and nature to serve human being. Enlightenment movement also continued it by emphasizing human “difference from, and right to exploit, ‘nature’, and operated as a kind of theological complement to their secular and temporalized teleology” (Soper 271). Taking human being as self-motivating rational and moral being, Enlightenment legitimated utilitarianism and instrumental rationality. Art, science and culture were vehicle for the realization for ‘human nature’. Though in a modified form, modernism, post-modernism, and culturalism, dominated by modern science and technology, comply with this view one way or other. They emphasize the discursive and revisable quality of what is claimed to be ‘natural’ to human beings. For them the concept of nature or environment itself is a “cultural construct” (Heise 170).

Another mode of viewing nature is non-anthropocentric or biocentric. Unlike the anthropocentric mode, it does not give superior privilege to human beings over nature. Influenced by Rousseau's formulation of conscience as the 'voice of nature' within us, Romanticism reacted to the Enlightenment movement and viewed human being in the cosmological sense, "totality of being of which we in some sense conceive ourselves as forming a part" (Soper 270). By taking biocentric non-hierarchical connectivity of organisms with the environment, ecocritics are the strong defenders of non-anthropocentric mode of viewing nature. In these realist perspectives, "nature refers to limits imposed by the structure of the world and human biology" (Soper 276). Neil Evernden claims that there is "no such thing as individual, only ... individual as a component of place, defined by place" (101, 103). In the non-anthropocentric mode, what is claimed to be natural is the determination of nature as a cosmos and hence human beings must accommodate to it for their well beings. American transcendentalists also view nature in the non-anthropocentric or cosmological sense as they keep human being within it. They even take nature as the alternative of God. And this is not a farfetched practice either. According to Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, "The connection between God and Nature has continued to inspire the musings of theologians, scientists, and naturalists, reminding us of the importance of reason and mystery in appreciating each domain" (211). What the American transcendentalists did is linking the universality of God with the universality of nature.

Emerson borrowed the term 'transcendental' from the German philosopher Immanuel Kant. Kant separated human beings from their dependence on religion for their knowledge presenting the view that human beings are autonomous in setting their own values and thoughts as they are the part of nature. According to Alison

Stone, “Kant thought that human beings not only are autonomous but also appear empirically –in everyday experience –to be part of nature ...” (368). So Kant supplied possible ways of reasoning. For him there are mainly two modes of reasoning. First is theoretical reasoning. It is made under the basis of sensual perception of the empirical world. Another is practical reasoning. It takes hold of no limitedness. In other words, it does not supply any object for reasoning. Kant asserted practical reasoning as he linked it with “Moral Law,” the “Highest Good,” which is possible for him only “under the presupposition of the immortality of soul” (qtd. in A. E. Kroeger 247). Since he saw possibility of moral law, he assumed immortality of soul and of a God. Furthermore, since theoretical reasoning is based upon immediate facts, and the practical reasoning upon the mediated knowledge of the external objects, Kant called cognition of immortality and a God as ‘faith,’ and only to the later cognition he took as knowledge. The basic difference between Kant and Emerson is just that whereas for the former soul and God are the matters of practical reasoning or what he called as knowledge which might not necessarily be connected to nature, for the latter they are imbedded in nature which are to be detected by reasoning too.

Emerson does not take nature as an object of fulfilling human gratifications. Instead, he takes it as the representation of the universal soul to which he also calls as God, the ultimate truth. The reason for this is that he sees the universal soul embedded within it. And he takes this very soul as the sole source of human motivation.

Emerson posits in *Nature*:

We learn that highest is present to the soul of man, that the dread universal essence, which is not wisdom, or love, or beauty, or power, but all in one, and each entirely, is that for which all things exist, that by which they are; that spirit creates; that behind nature, throughout

nature, spirit is present; that spirit is one and not compound; that spirit does not act upon us from without, that is, in space and time, but spiritually, or through ourselves. (519-20)

Emerson finds the universal essence present in the soul of man. He takes the universal essence as the amalgam of wisdom, love, beauty, and power. And for him, it does not work on its own but through nature, human beings included. So human being is not only the rightful heir of the universal essence but also the member of the biotic community that holds it. Emerson makes it implicitly clear that human being is not the commander of nature but its component and hence interdependent to it –a biocentric stand, which is one of the main projects of ecocriticism too.

All of the American transcendentalists internalized such views one way or other and started an independent literary and philosophic movement. It was opposite to rigid rationalism, to Locke's empirical philosophy, and to the social conformity, materialism, and commercialism. Locke's philosophy was dominant among these in North American life. It was worldly and doubtful of God and even of the human soul as it emphasized in experience of matter and senses for human knowledge, to the highly formalized religious orthodoxy. "Locke insisted that all ideas must come from sense experience –either from the outer senses of sight, hearing, and so on, or from the inner sense of reflection (Pratt 1: 364). American transcendentalism turned attention of the intellectual circle towards values of nature. Michael McLoughlin views that for the American transcendentalists, "Nature is not mechanical but vital, the universe is not dead or inanimate but radiantly alive, and that God is not remote but ever-present" (22). Emerson declares, "Nature is made to conspire with spirit to emancipate us" (*Nature* 514). American transcendentalism takes nature or the whole earth as the living organism with its own universal soul –a transcendental being.



There are some basic premises and tenets of American transcendentalism. The first premise is that the transcendentalists take an individual as the spiritual center of the universe: in an individual can be found the clue to nature, history and, ultimately, the cosmos itself. Second, for them, the structure of the universe literally duplicates the structure of the individual self—all knowledge, therefore, begins with self-knowledge. Third, they accept the neo-Platonic conception of nature as a living mystery, full of signs and symbols. Fourth, they believe that individual virtue and happiness depend upon self-realization. Arthur I. Laud takes “insistence upon the validity of immediate intuition, independent of any external experience or teaching” as an important tenet of American transcendental philosophy (132). Major features of American transcendentalism pointed out by M. H. Abrams in his *Glossary of Literary Terms* are also worth noting. They are: confidence in the validity of a mode of knowledge that is grounded in feeling intuition; an ethics of individualism that stresses on self-trust, self-reliance, and self-sufficiency; a turn away from modern society to the scenes and objects of the natural world, which are regarded both as physical facts and as correspondences to aspects of the human spirit; and, in place of a formal or doctrinal religion, a faith in a divine principle or spirit or soul, in which both humanity and cosmos participate (327).

American transcendental such nature oriented concepts got immediate popularity among the intellectuals of North America. However, it could not catch the sentiments of the general public that had stepped towards materialism from religiosity. And hence it lost its popularity within three decades. In a sense it appears that as American transcendentalists could not find people of the time ready or matured enough to apply the transcendental concepts in their practical life, they lessened their

efforts leaving the future generations to understand, complete and develop the task they had started for the worldly harmony and happiness. Thoreau visions:

And we are enabled to apprehend at all what is sublime and noble only by the perpetual instilling and drenching of the reality which surrounds us. The universe constantly and obediently answers to our conceptions; whether we travel fast or slow, the track is laid for us. Let us spend our lives in conceiving them. The poet or the artist never yet had so fair and noble a design but some of his posterity at least could accomplish it. (*Walden* 918-19)

Thoreau believes that we are destined to pave the only way that is laid for us from the existential reality. Though he does not find gifted poets who could discern the way, he is hopeful that his posterities could accomplish the job.

Like Thoreau, Emerson also does not find so much faith in the people of his time to realize human and nature affinity: "To speak truly, few adult persons can see nature. Most persons do not see the sun. At least they have very superficial seeing" (*Nature* 498). Like Thoreau, he also gives the responsibility of applying transcendental values to his posterity: "Build, therefore your own world. As fast as you can conform your life to the pure idea in your mind, that will unfold its great proportions. A correspondent revolution in things will attend the influx of the spirit" (*Nature* 524). Emerson believes that the universal spirit lurks behind human being. When human being becomes able to open nature to themselves, their true home in the universe is revealed. He pleads for this to his posterities.

Ecocritics appear to have understood the gravity of the task the American transcendentalists had handed over to their generations; and hence they seem to have shouldered the task of completing it, no matter with some modifications. Paul Shepard

puts, “And so ecology as applied to man faces the task of renewing a balanced view where now there is man-centeredness, even pathology of isolation and fear. It implies that we must find room in “our” world for all plants and animals, even for their otherness and their opposition” (63). This shows that the line of ecocriticism is somehow similar to that of the American transcendentalists. According to Barry Peter, ecocriticism takes its literary bearings from three American nineteenth century writers: Emerson, Margaret Fuller, and Thoreau (240). William Howarth winds up his article entitled "Some Principles of Ecocriticism" like this: "Thoreau brings my account to an end, for he is the author who wrote, ‘Shall I not have intelligence with the earth? Am I not part leaves and vegetable mould myself?’" (87). Like the American transcendentalists, Thomas Moore views that “Nature is not the only source of transcendence, but it is indispensable. Nature requires from us a natural religion, which may or may not coexist with an institution” (186-87). Similarly, Arne Naess puts, “there is a philosophy of man/nature relationship widely accepted among established experts responsible for environmental decisions which requires a pervasive, substantial change of present policies –in favor of our “living” planet, and not only for short-sighted human interests” (60). These show that ecocritics have taken line of the American transcendentalists and hence have the feelings of veneration to them. In this regard, American transcendentalism holds special importance for the emergence and development of ecocriticism. It took around one and half centuries to understand, complete and continue the task the American transcendentalists had started.

Like in the period of American transcendentalism, anthropocentrism has still been a determining form of human and nature relationships. At the same time, present world has been facing far more ecological threats than that of the past. Jonathan Bate

laments, "We are confronted for the first time in history with the possibility of there being no part of the earth left untouched by man" ("From 'Ret' to 'Green'" 171).

There have been fearful threats not only to nature but also to the human beings.

Ecocritics blame the anthropocentric world view for this. They take the anthropocentric relation with nature as the self-suicidal motive. William Rueckert in "Literature and Ecology" posits:

The problem now, as most ecologists agree, is to find ways of keeping the human community from destroying the natural community, and with it the human community. This is what ecologists like to call the self-destructive or suicidal motive that is inherent in our prevailing and paradoxical attitude toward nature. 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. All of the most serious and thoughtful ecologists have tried to develop ecological visions which can be translated into social, economic, political, and individual programs of action. Ecology has been called, accurately, a subversive science because all these ecological visions are radical ones and attempt to subvert the continued-growth economy which dominates all emerging and most developed industrial states. (107-8)

As most human activities are found destructive to nature and thereby self-suicidal, the ecocritics aim to find practical grounds upon which both human and natural communities coexist and flourish. They propose to replace the anthropocentric world view with non-anthropocentric one as the solution. Literary criticism is the prominent way they have chosen as the means.

Thomas Moore laments on the diminishment of spirituality in the people of the modern time. He says that in ancient times Venus was the patroness of sexuality, beauty, and gardens. She is a goddess of both the soft, comfortable, civilized life and the wilds and beauties of nature. Those who worshiped her could see, through her image, the awesome spirituality in ordinary things of beauty and in nature. “But lately we have been increasingly cut off from nature and therefore have felt the diminishment of our spirituality” (181). Explicitly or implicitly this is one of the reasons of American transcendentalists and ecocritics’ striving for a healthy human and nature relationship.

In the sections below, I have presented dominant features of American transcendentalism in relation to human and nature relationship, and I have also shown how the transcendentalists try to resolve problems related to human and nature relationships. I have observed how much these features are true with ecocriticism. Furthermore, I have shown some problems that ecocritics have felt, and I have also proposed possible remedies to resolve them. Lastly, I have tabled methodologies that have supported me in accomplishing my studies.

### **American Transcendental Literature in Relation to Nature**

Works of Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman project three main American transcendental features in regards to human and nature relationship. First, they view nature as the representation of the universal soul; second, they take human being analogous to nature; and third, they intend to make human behavior proportionate to nature by taking nature as source of inspiration. The transcendentalists in their moral tone hope for the reformation of human conducts from which there would be created not only social harmony but also harmony between humans and nature. Their writings

can be read also as didactically propositional. My focus is to analyze and explain these three features.

### **Nature as the Universal Soul**

For the American transcendentalists, nature is a medium of the transcendental being's appearance to humans to show them some aspects of ultimate reality. They believe that every object of nature is the symbolical manifestation of the transcendental-being or the universal soul. For them, every natural fact is trivial until it leads to some symbolical or moral significance. So they view that even human being is the part of the universal soul. The whole of American transcendental features are woven around this central theme.

It is Emerson who first proposes the notions of nature being the representation of universal soul. He takes nature or the whole earth as a living object with its own veins and spirit and human being as its part. In *Nature* he declares, "The foundations of man are not in matter, but in spirit. But the element of spirit is eternity" (522). Similarly, in the *Natural History of Intellect*, he opines, "I believe in the existence of the material world as the expression of the spiritual or the real" (qtd. in Call 101). Emerson believes that whole veins of nature flow through and around human being. For him nature not only gives human beings power to live but also invites them to live in accordance with its order for their survival and happiness. In other words, from nature human beings not only get energy to live but also principles of life.

In Emerson's view, human being has to get the canons of life from the revelation of their original relation with nature by means of intuition and insight got from the symbols of the objects of nature. For him, "Nature is the vehicle of thought" (*Nature* 504). He believes that there is original relation between human being and the

universe. For him, human happiness is possible when we understand this and apply in practical life.

For Emerson, human being is neither higher nor lower to nature. Instead, they represent nature. Whole nature flows from them. And hence human being, as the part of nature, is also a carrier or beholder of the universal spirit. So what one needs to do is to study the symbols of nature to understand human and nature affinity. Emerson builds a connection, "Every natural fact is a symbol of some spiritual fact." He adds, "Man is conscious of a universal soul within or behind his individual life, wherein, as in a firmament, the natures of Justice, Truth, Love, Freedom, arise and shine" (*Nature* 505). To this "universal soul" he also calls as "Over-Soul" ("Over Soul" 131)

Like Emerson, his followers Thoreau and Whitman also believe in the spirituality of nature. Thoreau takes sublimity as truth and this is known by studying nature that surrounds us: "In eternity there is indeed something true and sublime.... And we are enabled to apprehend at all what is sublime and noble only by the perpetual instilling and drenching of the reality which surrounds us" (*Walden* 918-919). He believes that the "universe constantly and obediently answers to our conceptions; whether we travel fast or slow, the track is laid for us." And so he asks us to "spend our lives in conceiving them" (*Walden* 919). Similar is the view of Walt Whitman. In "Song of Myself," he takes nature as the means to study his soul: "Logic and sermons never convince, / The damp of the night drives deeper into my soul" (653-654). He does not believe in logic or sermons but in the realization of his soul.

Emerson's attribution of the objects of nature including human being with the essence or universal soul not only won the hearts of the intellectuals of the time, it also became the sole feature of American transcendentalism that brought a halt in the existed past looking mode of life and moved many intellectuals to view human life in

relation to nature. This central feature of American transcendentalism gave rise to other subsequent features. One of them is the view that human being is not different from nature.

### **Human and Nature Analogous Relationship**

As American transcendentalism viewed all objects from the lens of nature, it took human being as the part of nature, not as its commander. Viewed in this way, people who would search their originality would naturally or psychologically incline towards nature. The transcendentalists did the same. They viewed that truths come to human being from intuition or insight which are generally flashed in the moments of passive contact with nature. For them growing mind is influenced fundamentally by nature rather than by educational systems. It happens so because there is natural connection between human and nature.

Taking human and nature analogous relationship is Thoreau's dominant theme. Influenced by Emerson's biocentric concepts, Thoreau goes to live in the forest of the Walden Pond to study man's original relationship with the universe. He returns from there after two years making a concrete notion that human being is no more different from nature. In *Walden* he asks, "Shall I not have intelligence with the earth? Am I not partly leaves and vegetable mould myself" (934)? He takes being absorbed with nature as an important process of knowing human being's original relation with the universe.

American transcendental concept of human and nature analogous relationship can be well understood also from Emerson's analogy of "transparent eye-ball." Emerson says that by being purified from the study of the universal spirit cast in the objects of nature, one is "uplifted into infinite space, -all mean egotism vanishes." In such a situation one is immersed with nature: "I become a transparent eye-ball. I am



nothing. I see all. The currents of the Universal Being circulated through me” (*Nature* 499). He further puts, "Nature says, -he is my creature, and maugre all his impertinent griefs, he shall be glad with me” (498). He views that when one is in nature, all sorrows vanish and delightful universal soul flows in him or her.

Whitman is comparatively more community based than both Emerson and Thoreau. If Emerson and Thoreau appear to have secluded themselves from the society by talking mostly about spirituality and nature, with Whitman everything happens mostly in the human communities. However, in taking human and nature non-anthropocentric stand, he is not behind Emerson and Thoreau. Like them, Whitman, in his "Song of myself", proclaims that he could easily turn to be an animal and live with them: "I think I could turn and live with animals,/ they are so placid and self contain'd,/ I stand and look at them long and long" (684-686). It is his immersing himself with nature.

American transcendentalists not only take human beings as analogous to nature but also mingle themselves with it one way or other. Question arises: what kind of human behavior would be emerged from such a practice. One may naturally reason that nature friendly human behaviors will emerge from the one who has internalized the features of nature.

### **Human Conduct Proportionate to Nature**

American transcendentalists view that as human beings are part of nature, their behavior too should be proportionate to nature. They think so because they take nature as the source of inspiration. Human beings with such a motivation naturally make free and loving relations, just as in nature, not only with fellow partners but also with fellow creatures that share the planet. They never hamper others affairs. The

transcendentalists are convinced that from such a conduct there would be harmony not only among human beings but also between humans and nature.

Emerson believes that human beings are dependent on nature not only for their survival but also for knowledge and conducts. If human beings study original nature, they are bound to make actions that match the order of nature. In his introduction to *Nature*, Emerson questions, "Embosomed for a season in nature, whose floods of life stream around and through us, and invite us by the powers they supply, to action proportioned to nature, why should we grope among the dry bones of the past ...?" (496-497). Thoreau goes to live in the forest of the Walden Pond with his propose to learn about the principles of life. The lesson he gets from the study of the nature is to take himself no more different from it and hence mould his conducts accordingly. This is the reason of his taking himself as the "vegetable mould" (*Walden* 934).

Expected behavior from one who is motivated to make his or her behavior proportionate to nature can be known from Whitman as the poetic character as presented in *Leaves of Grass*, mainly "Song of Myself." In the song, the poetic character says that if he sees someone degrading another, he feels himself to be degraded too: "Whoever degrades another degrades me,/ And whatever is done or said returns at last to me" (503-504). Whitman thinks that the same divine spirit or soul flows from him too as in others. He says that his voice will be the voices of prisoners and slaves, of diseased and despairing ones, of thieves and dwarfs, of wombs and father stuff, and of those whose rights have been snatched. And from him flow the forbidden voices of sexes, lusts and evils which he clarifies and transfigures to good ones.

From such nature oriented human behavior, American transcendentalists hoped to reform not only individuals but also social and governmental institutions

regarding human relations one another and with nature. Emerson and Thoreau gave speeches to different institutions mainly for this purpose. Describing Emerson's views on this, McLoughlin puts, "The spirit of prophecy is innate in every man; the soul in man is not a faculty but a spiritual light. ... This soul is the potential perceiver and the revealer of truth" (24). He further puts that man has the "ability to apprehend absolute ideas of truth, justice, rectitude, goodness, the right, the true, the beautiful by means of the symbols of nature" (27). Emerson and Thoreau believe that when human beings follow truth or originality, society is corrected automatically.

"The Civil Disobedience" is Thoreau's most powerful and influential political essay. In it he presents his belief that the law of conscience is a higher law than the civil law. This law is related to the revelation of natural law by means of the perceiver's contact with nature. According to Thoreau, when these laws are in conflict, it is the citizen's duty to obey the voice of the higher law or God within rather than that of civil authority. He believes that if a person goes to prison rather than obeying an evil law, he or she will rouse conscience of other people, who will in turn be inspired to change the government. With this conviction, he does not pay tax to the government reasoning that it is being imposing to collect not well defined tax.

American transcendental notion of nature as the replica of the universal soul or truth gives rise to the assumption that human being is no more different from nature and hence no more its commander. One who internalizes this naturally develops behaviors that are proportionate to nature. When everyone follows this mode of life, society is automatically reformed. This is the assumption of American transcendentalists. In this case, it is likely to know how much such features might be true with ecocriticism as it is also one of the nature oriented approaches of criticism.

## **Ecocriticism as the Heir of American Transcendentalism**

In terms of time, American transcendentalism came one and half centuries earlier than ecocriticism. Even then major features of American transcendentalism in relation to human and nature relationship are true also with ecocriticism to a relative extent. Both of them are biocentric in nature. Like the transcendentalists, ecocritics take human beings not as the centre of nature. Similarly, like them, ecocritics offer to make nature friendly human conducts. And in the recent years, ecocritics are showing interest in taking the earth as the form of higher organism, which is somehow related to American transcendental concept of "universal soul". From these, though implicitly, ecocriticism's root with American transcendentalism cannot be ignored. In *The Environmental Imagination*, Lawrence Buell contends that if literary history is to be re-imagined in terms of environment, Thoreau should be taken as the prophetic centre or "one of the key points of reference..." (367). For him, the saint of ecocriticism is Thoreau, the outright transcendentalist and follower of Emerson, the founding father of American transcendentalism.

### **Nature for its Own Worth**

In the preceding section, I have shown that American transcendentalists implicitly treat humans akin to nature. Similar to this, ecocriticism fights to give nature its intrinsic worth. It defuses the anthropocentric claim that nature is created for human being to exploit. It views that nature is valuable in its own worth. Human being is not higher or lower to any organism of nature. One of the dramatic developments in post-romantic thinking about nature has been the decline and revival of the kinship between nonhuman and human (Buell, *Environmental* 180). It can be well understood from the ecocritical concepts of deep ecology and theories of intrinsic values.

Ecocriticism diminishes any hierarchy between man and nature. It takes holistic approach. It seeks to work for biotic community of which human being is one of the members. Following assertion of Rueckert represents ecocritical position:

The view we get of humans in the biosphere from the ecologists these days is a tragic one, as pure and classic as the Greek or Shakespearean views: in partial knowledge or often in total ignorance, we are violating the laws of nature, and the retribution from the biosphere will be more terrible than any inflicted on humans by the gods. In ecology, man's tragic flaw is his anthropocentric (as opposed to biocentric) vision, and his compulsion to conquer, humanize, domesticate, violate, and exploit every natural thing. The ecological nightmare is of monstrously overpopulated, almost completely polluted, all but totally humanized planet. (113)

Human being destroys nature without any second thought. Rueckert thinks that counter reaction of nature will be unimaginably terrible to humanity. He blames anthropocentric notion for the destruction of nature as it gives human beings privilege over nature.

Ecocriticism takes non-anthropocentric position giving human being equal importance as other organisms of the biotic community. Reason behind this is that harmony in human beings is interwoven with the safety of the other organisms of the biotic community. As such, it draws on environmental sensibilities such as land ethic, deep ecology, theories of intrinsic value, changed understanding of environmental aesthetics, and ecofeminism. All these contribute one way or other to the ecocritical position and discourses which have been described as concerned with ecological systems, species and processes to the extent that "long term health of the biosphere

should take precedence" (Botzler and Armstrong 410). Greg Garrard views, "The fundamental problem of responsibility is not what we humans *are*, nor how we can 'be' better, more natural, primal or authentic, but what we *do*" (71-72). Consequently, the future of the world depends not on what human beings are or can be but on what they do. If they make unrestrained use of nature following anthropocentric values, harmony between human beings and nature will break. But if humans let nature live on its own with their non-anthropocentric conviction, harmony in human beings and nature retains.

Deep ecology, the philosophically based environmental position articulated by Arne Naess has a holistic focus and recognition of the interrelatedness and interdependence of human and non-human. Deep ecology questions and challenges anthropocentric relationships with the environment and offers ecocentric alternatives based on the recognition that "all organisms and entities in the ecosphere, as part of the interrelated whole, are equal in intrinsic worth" (Devall and Sessions 202). Deep ecology takes human beings not necessarily different from other organisms of the ecosphere.

Similarly, ecocentric approaches to environmental ethics propose arguments in defense of concepts of intrinsic values. They recognize existence and values of living beings and of the physical elements of environment, irrespective of their values for human purposes. This understanding interprets intrinsic value as synonymous with non-instrumental values, that is, the environment, or its elements, can have value as an end in themselves, they do not have to serve any use for human beings. Intrinsic worth, as understood by deep ecologists, can be "independent of any awareness, interest, or appreciation of it by any conscious being (Regan 273). In other words,

deep ecologists deny that the source of all environmental value lies in humans as valuers.

Feminists and gender critics have been found to have been strongest advocates of ecocriticism. Some feminists equate their body with geography to show exploitation to both women and nature by masculine world, the patriarchal settlement. This nature of criticism has been termed as ecofeminism, "a philosophy that denounces the hierarchical, dualistic thinking that leads to abuses of power and to alienation from nature" (Karla Armbruster 198). Ecofeminists take whole western philosophies as patriarchal, that "perpetuates the exploitation and oppression of nature in general and women in particular" (Murphy 197). Ecofeminists "emphasize the connections or continuity between women and nature" (Glottfelty and Fromm 295). By doing so, they tend to blame men for the whole human exploitation to nature. And by connecting females with nature, they argue that as men are responsible for the exploitation to nature, so are they doing to females as well. So ecofeminists' mission is to fight against male oppression to both nature and females: "Ecofeminism explicitly works to challenge dominant ideologies of dualism and hierarchy within Western culture that construct nature as separate from and inferior to human culture (and women as inferior to men)" (Armbruster 199). By presenting the view of Vera Norwood, Garrard views that women write wilderness by "experiencing immersion rather than confrontation, 'recognition' rather than 'challenge'" (76). Recognition of nature is reflected in the writings of women because they keep themselves nearer to nature.

Ecocritics appear to be the strong defenders of nature. They bring notions of environmental ethics, environmental aesthetics, deep ecologists, and eco-feminists in their support. One might wonder how the intrinsic worth of nature could be kept. One

can easily speculate that it becomes possible from the human conducts that cope with nature.

### **Nature Friendly Human Conduct**

Like American transcendentalists, ecocritics intend to make human conducts that is harmless not only to fellow partners but also to the harmony of nature. As ecocritics give intrinsic worth to the elements of nature, they want nature friendly human conducts. They hope that from this there will be no negative impacts of nature to human beings and that there will come great positive changes in the behavior of people among themselves and towards nature. They assume that from this there will be created harmony not only among human beings but also between humans and nature.

Like American transcendentalists, ecocritics express a need for human beings to cope with nature because their aim is to replace anthropocentric human conducts with non-anthropocentric one. In other words, like the transcendentalists, ecocritics want to reform the prevailing hierarchical and anthropocentric conducts of people to holistic one. Howarth puts, "As an interdisciplinary science, ecology describes the relations between nature and culture. The applied philosophy of ethics offers ways to mediate historic social conflicts" (71). Ecocritics hope that when humans take nature not inferior but complementary, they will learn to take their fellow partners also same as themselves, not different. Michael J. McDowell posits:

One of the major shifts in our scientific world view in the twentieth century had been to recognize the importance of systems and relationships in the phenomenal world. We've begun to realize that an entity is largely created and undergoes change by its interaction with other entities; nothing has unchangeable essence that it can maintain in



isolation, and no one can change in isolation merely through the effort of a transcendental ego.... More recently, many have celebrated the rise of a holistic world view that is more compatible with the ecological discoveries of the past thirty years than Cartesian dualism is. (371)

From the realization of the fact that there is interdependence between the entities of the phenomenal world, holistic world view is rising in the present time. Ecocritics hope that from the application of holistic world view in the practical life, there will be created harmony not only between human beings and nature but also among human beings.

Early works of ecocriticism show their interest in romantic poetry, wilderness narrative and nature writing. However, in recent years its interest has turned towards cultural ecocriticism. It enables the reader to analyze and critique the world in which we live. Garrard opines, "Indeed, the widest definition of the subject of ecocriticism is the study of the relationship of the human and the non-human, throughout human cultural history and entailing critical analysis of the term 'human' itself" (5).

Conventionally, ecocriticism focuses nature based literary works. Garrard makes the field of ecocriticism so wide that it studies human relation with non-human not only of the contemporary time but also of the whole human cultural history.

Somehow similar to American transcendentalists, ecocritics plead to make human behavior such that no intrinsic value of nature is violated. They believe that this is possible when the existed anthropocentric human values are replaced by non-anthropocentric ones. One of the small differences between American transcendentalists and ecocritics is that whereas the former take nature as the source of inspiration for human motivations, the latter are silent about it.

### **Earth as Gaia or Super Organism**

If nature is the manifestation of universal soul for American transcendentalists, ecocritics take earth centered approach to nature. Here lies discernible difference between the two. Ecocritics do not concern what is transcended in nature. Instead, they study what is scientifically observable in it. However, in the recent years ecocritics appear to be recognizing earth as Gaia or higher organism. It might be taken as a step of ecocritics towards spirituality of nature.

Unlike American transcendentalists, ecocritics do not explain human and nature relationship in terms of spirituality. They study the relation mainly in physical terms. It becomes clear from the following assertion of Cheryll Glotfelty, one of the prominent ecocritics, made in her paramount work *The Ecocriticism Reader*:

What then is ecocriticism? Simply put, ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the environment. Just as feminist criticism examines language and literature from a gender conscious perspective, and Marxist criticism brings an awareness of modes of production and economic class to its reading of texts, ecocriticism takes an earth-centered approach to literary studies. (xix)

Ecocriticism studies how nature is treated in a work of art. It applies earth centered approach in the interpretation and evaluation of a work of art.

The initial aim of ecocriticism was to reduce or solve the side effects to humans caused by human exploitation to the environment. However, it has broadened its field to study nature's influence in building cultural meanings and values. Garrard informs, "Much ecocriticism has taken for granted that its task is to overcome anthropocentrism, just as feminism seeks to overcome androcentrism" (176).

Ecocriticism aims to replace the prevailing anthropocentric worldview with non-anthropocentric one.

Though ecocriticism offers non-anthropocentric practices in human and nature relationships by showing objective connectivity between them, it has started, in the recent years, to view the earth as the higher organism. It is known as *gaia* hypothesis, which treats the earth as an integrated super-organism transcending conventional ecology: "Rather than merely being a rock in space with life clinging to it, the non-living parts of the planet are as much a part of the whole as non-living heartwood of a living tree" (Garrard 173). It is a step of ecocriticism towards recognizing spirituality of earthly objects.

Pantheism is another ground of meeting point between American transcendentalism and ecocriticism. Pantheism takes divinity and nature as inconvertible terms: God is everything and everything is God. The universe is composed of eternal and indestructible matters. These matters are interconnected and hence constitute wholeness. Pantheism is religious alternative to theism. Michael P. Levine puts: "As an alternative to, and denial of, theism and atheism, pantheism denies that God is a completely transcendent being distinct from the natural world" (2: 139). This is the main reason of Emerson's giving up pasturing in Churches and turning to nature taking it as the divine representation. As shown earlier, other transcendentalists agree him one way or other.

Ecocriticism has also pantheistic elements to a great extent. Levine puts, "Not accidentally, pantheism is often taken to be a view inherently sympathetic to ecological concerns" (2: 139). The reason for this is that ecocritics explicitly identify with and extol nature, and claim that human being has close association and identification with nature and it is necessary for their well-being. They suppose that

pantheism can offer a more suitable basis for an environmental ethic and perhaps for ethics generally. Harold W. Wood Jr., a founder of the Universal Pantheist Society, states, “Instead of a ‘conquer the Earth’ mentality, pantheism teaches that respect and reverence for the Earth demands continuing attempts to understand ecosystems. Therefore, among religious viewpoints, pantheism is uniquely qualified to support a foundation for environmental ethics” (qtd. in Levine, 2: 140). Though pantheists generally do not equate God with nature, they believe that nature is a divine unity. As presented above, this is the visible stand of the American transcendentalists, and ecocritics also employ this one way or other.

Just as American transcendentalists' taking humans no more different from nature, ecocritics give intrinsic value to nature. Similarly, just as American transcendentalists' pleading for nature coping human behavior, ecocritics plead for nature friendly human conducts. Ecocritics' willingness to treat earth as the higher organism can be taken as their one step toward spirituality of nature. From these similarities between the two, it can be well claimed that ecocriticism is the true heir of American transcendentalism directly or indirectly.

### **Ecocritical Gap and Possibilities**

Ecocriticism has emerged as one of the important critical and literary theories. Even then its practitioners have felt remarkable lack in their practical field. It might be the lack of unifying concept that could provide definite guide line in their practice. It is possible that the gap can be fulfilled by fully employing and intensifying the nature related features of American transcendentalism.

Despite the popularity of ecocriticism, there are some problems associated with its ideas. It is not only that only literary theorists sometimes take ecocriticism as “insufficiently problematic” (Howarth 78), even ecocritics themselves have felt some

lack in it. Deep ecology is one of the main philosophical bases of ecocriticism.

However, Arne Naess keeps discussion about it open: “While deep ecology need not be a finished philosophical system, this does not mean that the philosophers should not try to be as clear as possible. So a discussion of deep ecology as a derivational system may be of value” (56). Howarth claims, “After years of reading across several disciplines, from evolutionary biology and landscape architecture to environmental history and ethics, I’ve come to see that ecocriticism is evolving loosely because its authors share no sense of canon” (82). In *Beginning Literary Theory: an Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*, Barry Peter states that in ecocriticism “There is no universally accepted model that we have merely to learn and apply” (257-258). For Slovic, ecocriticism is not so much a specific critical methodology as a movement, a broader perspective toward the enterprise of literary scholarship and toward the meaning of human society on this planet. In “Ecocriticism: Containing Multitudes, Practicing Doctrine” Slovic states, “... ecocriticism has no central, dominant doctrine or theoretical apparatus –rather, ecocritical theory, such as it is, is being re-defined daily by the actual practice of thousands of literary scholars around the world” (161). According to Ursula K. Heise, ecocritics “diverge widely in their views” and how their “project should translate into the study of culture are continually subject to challenge and revision” (166). All of these critiques on ecocriticism indicate that it has yet to develop a central unifying philosophic concept that could give a definite canonical guideline to its practitioners.

Among the three basic principles of American transcendentalism mentioned in the preceding sections, ecocriticism appears to have similarities in regard to taking human and nature analogous relationship. Like the transcendentalists, ecocritics also focus on human and nature affinity. Glotfelty states, “Simply put, ecocriticism is the

study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment. ... ecocriticism takes an earth-centered approach to literary studies". She further views that it is a diverse field of literary study united by the shared premise that "human culture is connected to the physical world, affecting it and affected by it" (xix). This definition seeks to go beyond the narrow anthropocentric scope of literary scholarship, which traditionally emphasizes interactions among human beings. In other words, it seeks to study human being's relation to the environment in physical terms.

Question arises, could ecocriticism be taken as a complete philosophy from its success in establishing human and nature physical connectivity? If the mission of ecocriticism is to establish the connectivity between human and nature in objective terms, this is the job of environmental science or ecology. Richard Kerridge puts, "An ecologist studies forms of life not in isolation but as part of a system, an economy which sustains them and which they constitute" (267). Similarly, Peter Hay points out that contemporary green radicalism is rooted in science as well as aesthetics, an ecosystemic view rather than romantic individualism (10-11).

To acquire the status of a philosophy, there has to be a central concept. According to D. D. Raphael, "a philosophical theory ... should try to show connections and should tie up in a coherent system" (55). Andrew Brennan's question indicates similar need in a philosophy: "If there are various kinds of values, duties, and moral principles, and if these cannot be reduced to a single foundation, how are coherence and unit possible in ethical reflections?" (376). According to Heise, "Along with its theoretical diversity and interdisciplinarity, the rapid expansion of its analytic canon is one of the most striking features of ecocriticism" (172). As expressed by such ecocritics, ecocriticism does not have a canonical concept. Thus one of the

propositions of the dissertation is that the gap of unifying concept in ecocriticism can be fulfilled by fully internalizing above mentioned remaining two features of American transcendentalism: that nature is the manifestation of universal spirit and that being a part of nature, humans should make conducts proportionate to nature taking nature as the source of motivation.

By viewing that nature is a spiritual reality, Emerson and other American transcendentalists do not mean that what one sees is not real. What they mean is that whole objects of nature cast one unifying element, which is always spiritual or symbolic in quality and which is in turn applicable to all living and non-living things. And human beings, as the part of nature, should understand this spiritual element and apply in life as this will create human beings' harmony one among and with nature. Humans can immerse themselves with nature only through spiritual or holistic eye, not with dualistic eyes. Henry Drummond thinks, "And long before it was possible for religion to give scientific expression to its greatest truths, men of insight uttered themselves in psalms which could not have been truer to Nature had the most modern light controlled the inspiration" (274). Both American transcendentalism and ecocriticism try to correct this one way or other by showing logical or scientific validity of nature. Drummond questions, "How long will it take Science to believe its own creed, that the material universe we see around us is only a fragment of the universe we do not see?" (282). So, ecocriticism could also adopt American transcendental model of molding human conducts proportionate to nature by taking nature as the source of motivation. Human behavior developed in this way is more likely to be free and loving in quality as this is so in nature.

From the full application of above mentioned three American transcendental features in ecocriticism, human and nature affinity would be proved both physically

and spiritually. It would be proved to be one of the major helps in ecocritical plan of developing nature friendly human conducts. And this would create harmony both among humans and between humans and nature.

### **Methodology**

As human and nature relationship has been proposed to study, the research has been done by using qualitative research methods. Further, since the selected texts are nature oriented, they have been studied by using methods of ecocriticism, which orients, compares, contrasts the arguments in the thesis.

In *The Environmental Imagination*, Buell makes a “checklist” of four points that characterize the nature of environment oriented work. They are:

1. The nonhuman environment indicates that human history is implicated in natural history.
2. The human interest is not the only legitimate interest.
3. The ethical orientation of a text is based on human accountability to the environment.
4. Environment is a process rather than as a constant or a given. ( 6-8)

This check list has been used as the touch stone to evaluate the selected texts. By positing connections and relationships, ecocriticism permits interdisciplinary work to gain authority and analytic power from disciplines outside its own. Heise states, “With such a theoretical framework to link together the pieces of its international and interdisciplinary mosaic, ecocriticism promises to become one of the most intellectually exciting and politically urgent ventures in current literary and cultural studies (173). At bottom, it imports scientific methods in order to combat two positions: first, the claim that culture can be a refuse from nature, and, second, the postmodern claim that nature is the cultural construction.



Ecocriticism's transdisciplinarity provides opportunities to draw upon a range of critical theories, including literary theories, which have been afforded positions of privilege in the fields of language and literature studies to develop a unique framework to apply and interpret. The transdisciplinary of this study is further strengthened by my approach to textual analysis informed by appropriate critical theories.

The dissertation has been structured in six chapters. This first chapter, “American transcendentalism: Literary Epoch with Biocentric Ideals,” defends what and how the work could be accomplished. It presents problem, objectives, hypothesis, conceptual framework, methodology, delimitations and chapter overviews.

In the second chapter, “Review of Literature: Ecocritical Theories and Methods,” theoretical, methodological, and textual review of the related literature has been made. From this ecocritical paradigms and methodologies have been picked out to apply in the research and interpretations of the proposed texts. By using different literary devices and transdisciplinary approach, Ecocriticism seeks subject positions of literary or critical discourses. Main subject positions of such discourses may be divided in two groups: in the first group come strong anthropocentrism, weak anthropocentrism, shallow ecology, and sustainability. All these somehow maintain anthropocentric superiority of human beings over nature. In another group come biocentrism, non-anthropocentrism, ecocentrism, ecofeminism, deep-ecology, land ethics, and environmental ethics. All these carry biocentric ideals which give central prominence to the whole biotic community, not necessarily to human being. As ecocriticism is a philosophized term with biocentric ideals, it has earned widespread use and acceptance. So I have also mostly used ‘ecocriticism’ almost synonymously with biocentrism.

Third, fourth, and fifth are core research chapters. Third chapter, “Emerson’s *Nature*: Nature as the Universal Soul,” presents supra individual features of nature as reflected in Emerson’s *Nature* by capturing his dominant theme of nature’s spiritual representation. In the same context, ecocritical concept regarding spirituality of nature has also been studied. This answers the first research question, which is to know how both American transcendentalists and ecocritics treat nature regarding spirituality.

Chapter IV, “Thoreau’s *Walden*: Human Being as Nature,” explores Thoreau’s *Walden* by noting his implicit but major argument that human being is akin to nature. Ecocritical concept of human and nature relationship has also been studied in the same context. This fulfills the second research question, which is to know how American transcendentalists and ecocritics view human being in relation to nature.

Chapter V, “Whitman’s *Leaves of Grass*: Love and Freedom in Nature,” studies Whitman’s *Leaves of Grass*, mainly his representative song “Song of Myself,” by capturing his major theme of employing love and freedom in life as these are some features of nature. Ecocritical concept of human behavior in relation to nature has also been studied in the same context. This fulfills the third research question, which is to know how and what kind of human behavior in relation to human and nature relationship American transcendentalism and ecocriticism seek to develop.

In the final chapter, “Harmony in Human Beings and Nature,” conclusion has been drawn from the study. It restates the thesis statement, summarizes major features of American transcendental literature and that of ecocriticism regarding their treatment of human and nature relationship. It also restates the absence of unifying concepts in ecocriticism. Then it draws conclusion that it would be worthwhile for ecocriticism to apply American transcendental concepts to develop itself to a full shaped philosophy that could fulfill present need of the nature-centered philosophy in

connecting human culture to nature both physically and spiritually for world peace, harmony and development.

### **Summary**

In sum, American transcendental literature has been studied from the ecocritical perspective because both of these focus nature. This has been done with the hope that there could be found some features in American transcendentalism that could be used in further intensifying ecocriticism.

As both American transcendentalism and ecocriticism focus natures, there are ample similarities in their treatment of nature. One of the major similarities is that both take human being analogous to nature. However, there are some differences too: whereas American transcendentalists take nature as the manifestation of the universal soul, ecocritics emphasize in showing physical connections between human and nature. Similarly, whereas the formers propose to take nature as the model for human behavior, the latters do not explicitly plead for this.

However, ecocritics have felt some unease in their practical field. This might be due to lack of unifying central concept in ecocriticism that could fulfill their need of proper theoretical and methodological guidance. This need could be fulfilled by applying American transcendental concepts of ‘universal soul’ and ‘human behavior proportionate to nature’ in ecocritical features to make it as one of the promising philosophies of the time and develop non-anthropocentric human behavior for earthly peace and development.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE: ECOCRITICAL THEORIES AND METHODS

Guided by the objectives of the study to know the features of human and nature relationships in American transcendental literature and compare them with the features of ecocriticism in the same context, review has been made of secondary materials related to the selected texts of American transcendental literature and related texts of ecocriticism. Since the selected texts are nature oriented and they have been proposed to study from the ecocritical perspective, environmental and ecocritical texts have covered most part of the literature review. The review has been helpful in formulating theoretical and methodological guidelines for the proposed study.

Environmental philosophy in the modern form was developed in the late 1960s. In 1962 Rachel Carson published *Silent Spring* showing the dangers brought about by the use of pesticides and chemical toxins in planetary food webs. Similarly, in 1968 Paul Ehrlich published *Population Bomb* in which he anticipated hundreds of millions of deaths in the coming decades because of being failed to supply food to an ever-expanding global population. Environmentalists took environmental imbalance as the main cause of such threats. So they viewed that it is impossible to bring harmony in humans and nature without learning to live in balance with the natural environment. Such a view raised multiple environmental discourses. As feminists and political and literary theorists turned their attention to environmental issues, more debates arose from the 1980s onward. By the early 1990s the field of environmental philosophy was established. In its early days, environmental philosophy focused on the call of the wild. But “the questions of wilderness and its moral and aesthetic status were heavily debated in the 1990s and into the first decade of the twenty-first century” (Brennan 378). The ways in which the environment and nature have been

construed in philosophical, political, and literary texts has provided materials for a new area of literary theory known as 'ecocriticism.'

Thus ecocriticism is one of the most recent fields of research which was emerged from the diversifying matrix of literary and cultural studies in the 1990s. Contemporary environmental discourses concern the issues such as restoration, urban environments, pollution, and resource depletion and their connections with poverty, dispossession, housing, environmental policy, social justice, and sustainability and are interwoven with the discourses of sociology, politics, economics, ecology, ethics. However, these discourses are in a constant state of multiplicity of debates, characterized by the volatility and subtle variation within them. Despite the complexities, it is environmental discourses that have shaped ecocritical awareness. Ecocriticism is a rapidly growing field in the field of literary and critical studies.

The review has been divided into three parts: theoretical, methodological and textual. In the theoretical review, related environmental and ecocritical texts have been reviewed. From this, theoretical framework has been picked out for the proposed studies. Similarly, methodological tools for the studies have been gathered from the methodological review. And in the textual review, books related to selected texts of American transcendental literature have been reviewed. In the sections below, reviews of some books come successively in different topics and places owing to the needs of theoretical, methodological, and textual reviews.

### **Theoretical Review: Ecocritical Paradigms**

Emerson's *Nature*, Thoreau's *Walden* and Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*, especially his representative long poem "Song of Myself," present different aspects of human and nature relationship. As these books have been proposed to study from the perspective of ecocriticism, it is important to know what theoretical position of human

and nature relationships they represent. For this, theoretical positions within the field of ecocriticism have to be known first. This has been done by making theoretical review.

Ecocriticism, commonly known as environmental literary criticism, starts by studying how human beings have viewed nature over times. It looks to a range of texts in order to understand how human beings have understood their relation to the planet. It finds three consecutive developments in the human treatment of nature. They are: strong anthropocentrism, which keeps humans at the center and makes unrestrained use of nature; weak anthropocentrism, which inclines to make restrained use of nature for human benefit; and non-anthropocentrism or ecocentrism, which does not give any privilege to human over nature. These are taken as the ecocritical paradigms.

### **Strong Anthropocentrism: Dominion over Nature**

In "Environmental Ethics and Weak Anthropocentrism," Bryan G. Norton divides environmental discourses into two main parts: "strong anthropocentrism" and "weak anthropocentrism" (156). His account of strong anthropocentrism is that the unquestioned preference of human beings and their interests dictate the use of the environment without any check. The reason for this is that strong anthropocentrism assumes human beings to be superior and the whole cornucopian nature to have been made for them. If there is damage to nature, either nature self-regulates or human being recovers it. So strong anthropocentrism holds the notion that the more humans use nature the more they can flourish.

Western beliefs on human relationships with nature have been shaped by Greco-Roman traditions which privileged humans as the measure of all things, and Judeo-Christian beliefs derived from the biblical Book of Genesis (*Holy Bible* 1:26),

with its directive for human dominion and mastery over the natural world and all its inhabitants. Patricia Waugh puts: "Anthropocentrism is the placing of humanity at the centre of everything, so that other forms of life will be re regarded only as resources to be consumed by human beings" (537). And according to Lynn White, Jr., "Christianity is the most anthropocentric religion the world has seen" (43). Islamic religious beliefs are also implicated in notion of human dominion over nature. In *A Big Fix: Radical Solutions for Environmental Crises*, I. Lowe suggests that they share with Judeo-Christian writings, a line to Abrahamic languages which

are all based on the fundamental premise of the innate superiority of humans, who have dominion over all other species and the right to exploit them for our needs. This has arguably been the mythos underpinning consumer society: the Earth and all other species are at our disposal to exploit as we see fit. (39)

This shows that Islamic world has Judeo-Christian heritage, and hence it has anthropocentric inclination. For White "Marxism, like Islam, is a Judeo-Christian heresy" (43).

In *The Politics of the Earth: Environmental Discourses*, John S. Dryzek has well represented the nature of contemporary environmental discourses. He identifies the confidence in human needs and demands being continually satisfied through the manipulation of the environment. This notion is underpinned by two assumptions. First, an assumption that human role is to have dominion over the cornucopian environment, and second is the assumption that human capabilities can overcome environmental challenges. Human self-interest will ensure a bright environmental future despite continual human plundering of the cornucopian bounty (Dryzek 61).

The discourses of strong anthropocentrism are linked with the potential for positive human outcomes extended by economic models. Economic growth models have supported and continue to support Western countries' ever-increasing standards of living which progressively place more stress on the environment. These models also generate innovative means for overcoming the difficulties associated with them. And there was no any remarkable counter to the anthropocentric notion of human and nature relationship. However, no matter how inventive human ingenuity may be, it may not be enough to counter the stresses placed by the environment. Dryzek suggests that "economic growth usually means increased stress on environmental systems –more pollution, more congestion, faster depletion of resources ... but the political-economic discourse of liberal capitalist systems still generally floats free from any sense of environmental constraints" (52). However, ecological discourses have helped shape "the downside of dominance" (P. R. Ehrlich and A. H. Ehrlich 45).

Ecological discourses articulate the undesirable outcomes from relationships of dominance over the environment. These have highlighted the deleterious effects of continued relationships of dominance. Within a broad context, discourses of environmental crisis have shifted, from expressing concerns about disasters in the future, to what Frederick Buell in *From Apocalypse to Way of Life: Environmental Crisis in the American Century* has named as "dwelling in crisis" (181). He identifies what could be regarded as three development stages in the discursive transition in environmental texts: (i) apocalyptic future; (ii) environmental deterioration; and (iii) living in crisis.

In sum, strong anthropocentrism is the notion derived from the Judeo-Christian traditions that gives license to humans for making unrestrained use of nature as it attributes superior privilege to them over nature. It assumes that the infinite or



cornucopian nature is made for man and hence the more humans use it the more they progress. However, ecological discourses have shown deleterious effects of the strong anthropocentric relationships of dominance over nature.

### **Weak Anthropocentrism: Environmental Sensibility**

Weak anthropocentrism rejects the strong anthropocentric claim that nature is infinite and humans are free to use it. It takes nature finite, which demands its careful use. According to Norton, weak anthropocentrism critiques preferences, rationalizes human behavior and is critical of "value systems which are purely exploitative of nature" (165). If humans use nature regardless of the natural balance, it makes negative impacts to humanity. Jonathan Bate states, "If we destroy all the trees, we will irremediably disrupt not only the economy of nature but also our own social and psychological economy" ("The Economy of Nature" 91). Present world is facing threats of climate change, reduction of food and energy supply, pollution, loss of biodiversity, species extinction, deforestation, land degradation, etc. Weak anthropocentrism blames unrestrained human exploitation of nature for this. So it has developed concept of sustainable development in which there is careful or balanced use of nature. Weak anthropocentrism gives humans stewardship role to nature. This human role holds the notion that unplanned use of nature has to be guarded for the benefit of both humans and nature. This concept has been understood as environmentalism, with its epitaph as 'sustainable development'.

Damages to nature have been made throughout human history, with the trend that the more humans approach new time the higher the intensity. Close concerns over it have appeared mostly after 1960s. The notion that earth is the finite planet with limited capacities to support human life has received attention since the late 1960s. Everything changed in a hurry with Ehrlich's *The Population Bomb* published in

1968. In it Ehrlich presented the fact that population explosion was going to exhaust stock of energy, cropland, clean water, minerals, and the assimilative capacity of the atmosphere and ocean. The oil embargo of 1973 organized by the Organization for Petroleum Exporting countries forced to realize this. Daily the interdependence of humanity's relationship with the environment is evidenced as complex and in need of critical, close attention. Such concerns over the rampant damage on nature gave rise to environmental studies. Most recent expressions of concern for environmental issues are reverberations of voices that over the past fifty years have proffered solutions and predicted dire consequences to wide ranging environmental problems such as: excessive use of chemical biocides, over population, finite nature of earth's resources, preservation of natural wilderness areas, global climate change, and biological diversity. In "Environmental Discourses", P. Muhlhausler and A. Peace state that these multiple perspectives on human interactions with the environment, with their often contradictory ways of responding to serious environmental issues, have contributed to a dramatic increase in environmental discourses since the middle of the twentieth century.

Mark Hertsgarrd's *Earth Odyssey* is one of the best books to understand about environmental damage and problems. It is a travelogue that presents the author's first hand experience of environmental problems he saw during his whole earth tour made to study the same. He has not presented this just in the form of record or story. Instead he has given them a form of insightful critical essays, eleven in number, written from the environmental perspective. One may be surprised to know the causes and impacts of environmental degradation. The author has also given proper solutions to the problems.

In the essays, Hertsgarrd has presented wars, environmental destruction and hunger being faced by African countries, especially South Africa and Sudan. He puts, "I had left the United States wondering whether the human species would survive the next hundred years, but in Africa I encountered huge numbers of people for whom surviving even the next hundred days was no sure thing" (25). Likewise, Hertsgarrd talks also about the nuclear leakages of former Russia not only once but several times from as early as 1957 which were kept secret for political reasons. He takes production of nuclear as a threat to human beings which may, in his view, bring even extinction of the species called *Homo sapiens*. He has also included ozone layer depletion and global warming caused by the emission of carbon by vehicles and factories in the developed country like America and developing country like China; the acid rain fall in China caused by over use of coal and its pollution caused by population explosion; the traffic jam of Bangkok. He has pleaded for unified efforts against the causes of environmental degradation. He shows our bright future if we are committed for the same.

Since the Brundtland Commission report, *Our Common Future* which was made in 1987, the most prominent environmental discourses have been those that espouse sustainability. Diverse governmental and non-governmental organizations at international, national and local levels conceptualize sustainability to suit their particular perspectives and political mandates. Integrating the principles of sustainable development into country's policies and programs is one of the targets contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration to reach the goal of environmental sustainability. In 2002, the World Summit for Sustainable Development urged States not only to take immediate steps to make progress in the formulation and elaboration

of national strategies for sustainable development but also to begin their implementation by 2005.

Environmental discourses, therefore are worthy of serious attention to the context of a contemporary, Western, socio-political framework. In *The Politics of the Earth: Environmental Discourses*, Dryzek analyses many of the popular texts and environmental reports in order to make sense of the distinctive reciprocity that exists between environmental discourses and environmental issues. Four broad categories of contemporary environmental discourses are identified in Dryzek's study: (i) environmental problem solving; (ii) survivalism; (iii) sustainability; and (iv) green radicalism (15-16). For Dryzek, each category of environmental discourse recognizes, constructs and privileges certain basic entities such as governments, markets, humans, resources, technologies, and ecosystems. Certain relationships between these entities can be described as competitive, cooperative, hierarchical or equal. In Dryzek's analysis, each discourse includes motivated agents, who, in the terms of this study, would be considered ecological subjects: "enlightened elites, rational consumers, ignorant and short-sighted populations, virtuous ordinary citizens..." (18).

The position of weak anthropocentrism is thus most conspicuously articulated in the discourses of sustainability, what Dryzek has described as "a discourse of reassurance" (157). Weak anthropocentrism offers humans a future, hope of survival in the face of contemporary environmental crises. Yet reassurance alone is insufficient to ensure survival, if sustainability is merely "a discourse rather than a plan of action" (Dryzek 149). For survival, humans need to be proactive, to acknowledge warning signs and to act to bring about attitudinal change and life style modification.

Common to all accounts of sustainability are the explicit or implicit assumptions that human agents will act to change or modify their ways of engaging

with the environment. When Dryzek says sustainability entails "ecological protection, economic growth, social justice, and intergenerational equity, not just locally and immediately, but globally and in perpetuity" he is implying human involvement in ongoing processes for these goals to be achieved (142). Human agency is interpreted in ways that support proactive humans as individuals and collaborative and inclusive communities that work towards achieving sustainability.

In *Ecological Politics in an Age of Risk*, Ulrich Beck presents the view that sustainability requires not only cooperation between all levels of government –global, regional, and local –but also a democracy where citizens actively engage in environmental issues and maintain a critical scrutiny of environmental measures introduced by governments, corporate capitalism, and the scientific establishment. In *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Deleuze and Guattari have expounded this concept of ethical regard for the environment, based on action of self-regulating subjects. They have adopted an ecological framework to suggest that each individual is an infinite multiplicity and the whole of nature is a multiplicity of perfectly individuated multiplicities. This view applies postmodern perspectives, with their emphasis on subjectivities, diversity, and transience, to both individual human beings and the environment. According to M. Oelschlaeger, as expressed in *Postmodern Environmental Ethics*, postmodern influences on environmental discourses suggest an alignment between reconstructive postmodernism and the discourse of sustainability. This interpretation proposes an emphasis on the importance of communities and collaborative discussion rather than individual action.

Concepts of Western understandings of intrinsic value are missing from official responses to sustainability. From pragmatic and postmodern perspectives, intrinsic value is an untenable concept. Pragmatic perspectives on environmental

ethics reject accounts of intrinsic value, proposing that "all value judgments are meaningless, arbitrary, subjective, irrational expressions of emotion" (Hargrove 176). In contemporary socio-cultural contexts, intrinsic value is associated with aesthetics. Assumptions about aesthetics influence the assignation of non-instrumental value to animals and other aspects of the environment. Aesthetic aspects of the environment such as scenic or picturesque areas of National Parks, also involve non-instrumental value, yet aesthetic responses such as these remain powerfully anthropocentric with the corollary that there is a need to conserve unspoiled environments, if only for the aesthetic pleasure they bring to humans. These are socially-enculturated ways of knowing which always foreground human interests "because knowing is the quintessential anthropocentric act of appropriation" (Fromm 8).

*Classics in Environmental Studies: An Overview of Classic Texts in Environmental Studies* edited by Nico Nelissen, Jan Van Der Straaten and Leon Klinkers is one of the best books to know the initiation and development of environmental studies. Visible concern for the environment began to appear during 1940s. During 1950s and 1960s, authors began to analyze environmental issues more systematically. They searched the historical roots of the environmental crises. In the decade of 1970s, environmental studies became popular. During 1980s more knowledge on environmental problems became available and there were also more policy instruments to deal with the problems. Within 1980s there appeared the concept of sustainable development. Since then it has become popular as an integrating discourse covering environmental issues from the local to the global level. The book also provides agenda for the future development on the line of environmental awareness and positive changes in environmental behavior.

Present world is facing threats of climate change, reduction of food and energy supply, pollution, loss of biodiversity, species extinction, deforestation, land degradation, etc. *The Environmental Responsibility Reader* edited by Martin Reynolds, Chris Blackmore and Mark J. Smith offers solutions to these environmental problems. It is an anthology of environment related essays. The book intends to give insight into what responsibility can and need to be taken to solve these problems which cast unexpected threats: who might do it and how and why it is necessary to focus on environment. It focuses to the environmental awareness and sustainable development. However, it also gives some insights into ecocriticism as its root itself is environment.

The book provides an overview of and some background to ethical theories. It focuses on the need for changing values and perspective regarding the sense of obligation towards the environment. It also focuses on our responsibility towards environment. It intends to shift the environmental responsibility from constructing nature as 'resources' for economic development towards a more mutually dynamic process enabling socio-ecological well being. It presents the human world in relation to the environment. The readings examine individual and collective responsibilities to the environment operating in different levels and in different contexts. It highlights the political, social and institutional roles in environmental decision making which could frame multiple values and enable development of individual and collective virtues. *Outlooks: Readings for Environmental Literacy* edited by Michael L. McKinney, et al. is a worth reading book for environmental literacy. It provides overview, problems of resource scarcity, problems of environmental degradation and social solutions. The collected materials are brain storming and give deep insight related to environmental problems and solutions.

*Environmental Sustainability* edited by Fraser Smith is an important book to understand human and nature relationship. It presents environment related articles drawn from central and south America, sub-Saharan Africa, and South and Southeast Asia. They cover an extremely broad range of topics, including the philosophy of sustainable development, institutions, belief systems, indigenous cultures, resource use, energy use, economic modeling, econometric analysis, international trade, financial aid, forestry, wildlife, land rights, fisheries, and more. In its “Foreword”, Tomothy O’Riordan claims: “This is a book ostensibly about ecological economics, an emerging interdisciplinary science that seeks to unite the human kind to the home of nature” (np.). As the hope of the editor, the book can be an eye opener to the readers in the matter of environmental studies.

The book discusses philosophical and conceptual aspects of sustainable development from the point of view of people in developing countries. It intends to show the need to change attitudes in the wider world to be more closely aligned with those people who live in relatively sustainable harmony with their natural surroundings. The book also contains detailed case studies from around the developing world that are used to support new arguments about sustainable development. Many of these case studies highlight the challenges and successes of specific efforts to make economic activities more ecologically sustainable.

Reviewed discourses of sustainability, have a threefold purpose: to offer hope of human survival; to critique environmental exploitation; and to propose human action to avert or redirect environmental crises. The human agency prompted by sustainability is derived from concepts of stewardship that are associated with consideration for the environment while still supporting a hierarchical position that privileges human beings over other living and life supporting elements. As understood



from the Bible, there are conventional relationships that recognize the environment as a gift held in trust. To fulfill their contractual obligations, humans are therefore called upon to stand apart from, but take responsibility for the environment.

### **Ecocentrism: Ecological Equality**

Ecocentrism, commonly known as ecocriticism, goes beyond even stewardship notion of weak anthropocentrism. It suggests an understanding, drawn from ecology, that coincides with Barry Commoner's first law of ecology, that everything is connected to everything else; what affects one, affects all. The term 'ecological' opens up more possibilities than the term 'environmental.' 'Ecological,' by implication, an awareness of relationships of interconnectivity and interdependence, includes the possibility of ecocentric perspectives, or what K. Pilz in *An Italian Literary Perspective: Italo, Calvino* has described as an a-centered network of interactions between humans, living beings and the physical elements of the environment. Use of the term 'ecological' in ecocriticism is an attempt to avoid the anthropocentric connotations of the word 'environmental' which presupposes positive action that may nevertheless place humans as the controller of the environment. Slovic opines, "In today's society one of the most basic roles of environmental writers and their scholarly commentators is simply to redirect our attention to the world beyond human construction –to make us pay more attention to ourselves and to nature" ("Ecocriticism" 226). Ecocentrism takes human being equal status as nature. It fights to give nature intrinsic worth. Ecocentrists are sometimes taken as the lawyers of nature.

The notion opposite to anthropocentrism is ecocriticism. Waugh defines: "Ecocriticism means attempting, at least as an imaginative gesture, to place the ecosystem, rather than humanity, at the centre" (537). Grieved by human

mistreatment of other animal species, some ecocritics view that until humans learn to respect the subjectivity, intelligence, and mere right to live, of organism other than ourselves, we cannot be fully humane in our treatment of each other.

Ecocritics long for a sense of community and shared holistic ideals. So in its first stage it differed sharply from postmodern thought which defined human subject excluding it from the nonhuman world. It also critiqued modernity's "presumption to know the natural world scientifically to manipulate it technologically and exploit it economically" for human progress (Heise 167). Ecocentric discourses draw on environmental sensibilities such as the land ethic, deep ecology, theories of intrinsic value, and changed understandings of environmental aesthetics which are closely aligned with ecological principles. Conceptual complexities and contestations associated with these paradigms are examined here for their contribution to the discourses of ecocentrism, which have been described as concerned with ecological systems, species and processes, to the extent that the "long term health of the biosphere should take precedence" (Botzler and Armstrong 410).

### **Land Ethic**

The land ethic outlined by Aldo Leopold in *A Sand County Almanac* established a pattern of concern for the environment that was based on the holistic view of land as constituted of soils, water, plants, and animals. He produced the key ideal of his land ethics: that "land is to be loved and respected is an extension of ethics" (Leopold, "Foreword" viii-ix). He believed that community of life matters, not necessarily its individual members: "a thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise" (224-225). Unlike ethical positions which focus on individual entities and are formulated on considerations based on rationality, sentience, and reverence for

life, the land ethic focuses on whole ecosystems and the interrelationships and interdependencies that exist within and between them.

In "The Conceptual Foundations of the Land Ethic" J. Baird Callicott contends that three scientific cornerstones ground the land ethic. Firstly, Darwin's evolutionary biology "establishes a diachronic link between people and nonhuman nature"; secondly, ecological biology provides "a synchronic link ... a sense of social integration of human and nonhuman nature ... interlocked in one humming community of cooperations and competitions"; thirdly, an assumption based on Copernican astronomy that the earth is part of a larger universe (Callicott, "The Conceptual Foundations of the Land Ethic" 153)

### **Deep Ecology and Approaches of Intrinsic Value**

Another radical position in environmental ethics, deep ecology, the philosophically based environmental position articulated by Naess in "The Deep Ecological Movement: Some Philosophical Aspects," has a holistic focus and a recognition of the interrelatedness and interdependence of human and non-human. Naess provided the initial content of deep ecology by contrasting it with the "shallow" ecology movement that only wanted to reform some of the practices of industrial society to reduce its stress to the environment.

Naess proposes eight point principles of deep ecology. Main two are:

1. The well-being and flourishing of human and non-human Life on Earth have value in themselves (synonymous: intrinsic value, inherent value). These values are independent of the usefulness of the non-human world for human purposes.
2. Richness and diversity of life forms contribute to the realization of these values and are also values in themselves. (49-50)

Naess views that humans should care for the extended, or ecological, self because each person is more than just his or her body. "Extended self-concern obliges humans not only to connect with and care about the other people who have made them what they are but also to care for the multifarious systems and beings on which continued human existence depends" (Brennan 373). Internalizing such a view, deep ecology questions and challenges anthropocentric relationships with the environment and offers ecocentric alternatives based on the recognition that "all organisms and entities in the ecosphere, as part of the interrelated whole, are equal in intrinsic worth" (Devall & Sessions 202). It foregrounds the value of nature in and of itself, the equal right of other species, and the importance of small communities. From the late 1990s on, however, the field gradually moved to the more social ecological positions that dominate ecocriticism today (Lawrence Buell, *Future* 97-98). Naess takes deep ecological movement more as eco-philosophy or ecosophy than as ecology. He defines ecosophy as a philosophy of harmony or equilibrium.

Understandings of intrinsic value are the most contentious aspect of ecocentric approaches to environmental ethics. Intrinsic value of nature is the defining project of environmental ethics. "If an environmentally oriented policy decision is not linked to intrinsic values, its rationality is yet undermined" (Naess 57). Environmental ethicists propose arguments in defense of concepts of intrinsic value which recognize the existence and value of living beings and the physical elements of the environment, irrespective of their value for human purposes. For O'Neill, as put in "The varieties of intrinsic value", this understanding interprets intrinsic value as synonymous with non-instrumental value, that is, the environment, or elements of it, can have value as an end in themselves, they do not have to serve any use for human beings.

Intrinsic worth, as understood by deep ecologists, can be "independent of any awareness, interest, or appreciation of it by any conscious being" (Regan 273). In other words, deep ecologists deny that the sources of all environmental value lies in humans as valuers. In this understanding, intrinsic value is synonymous with objective value and is, as O'Neill suggests, a meta-ethical claim. It denies the subjectivist view that the source of all value lies in valuers.

### **Ecological Aesthetics**

Contemporary approaches to environmental aesthetics, informed by ecological understandings, support ecocentric perspectives rather than the anthropocentric positions. Western conceptions of aesthetic experiences of the environment, including the Romanticism of the eighteenth century and Kantian accounts of the sublime, conformed to culturally dominant ideas of the aesthetic properties of the environment which sanctioned dualistic divisions. Thus the dichotomous human-environment relationships reasserted the power of human subjects over the environment as a threatening "Other" and strengthened humans' separation from the environment.

Challenges to the aesthetic appreciation of the environment from the late eighteenth century visual appeal of the scenic/picturesque have lead to the development of theories of eco-friendly aesthetics, that is, the aesthetic appreciation of 'unscenic' environmental entities, where aesthetics are shaped by understandings. Changed understanding of environmental aesthetics shape and are shaped by ecocentric discourses. These theories of aesthetics propose that an awareness of the ecological complexities and interconnections between living and nonliving organisms contribute to aesthetic appreciation of all aspects of the environment, not just the attractive, scenic, grand, or awe inspiring. It has been argued in various ways that ecologically informed aesthetic appreciation, rather than endorsing a human focused

approach to the environment which separates humanity from the environment, may shape ecocentric and holistic environmental understandings.

More recently, developments in environmental aesthetics have included a reinterpretation of traditional understandings of the sublime. In "Toward an Ecological Sublime" Christopher Hitt interrogates previous understandings of the sublime which limit human interactions with the environment to an unequal power relationship between an autonomous, human subject in confrontation with a threatening 'other'. This strongly anthropocentric approach is overturned by Hitt, who proffers an account of the ecocentric possibilities of the sublime. Countering interpretations of the sublime experience which propose that initial fear is overcome by the validation of the perceiving subject's authority over the environment, Hitt theorizes an ecological sublime that acknowledges the "revelatory experience" but does not include the re-inscription of human domination over the environment (609). By drawing upon the recognition of human respect and admiration for the environment, Hitt elicits in the sublime humility suggestive of ecocentric principles (607). Humility can foster human engagement with the environment that negates environmental otherness and breaks down binaried perspectives.

### **Green Radicalism**

Ecocritical discourses are also treated as green radicalism. Mainly ecofeminists, deep ecologists, bioregionalists, eco-socialists, green economists, green parties come under this term. In *The Politics of the Earth* Dryzek divides green radicalism into two categories: one that focuses on changing consciousness, and another that looks more explicitly to green politics.

A stress on green consciousness has the conviction that the way people experience and regard the world in which they live is the key to green change. Once

conscious has changed to appropriate direction, then politics, social structures, institutions, and economic systems are expected to come to the track of green. Deep ecologists, ecofeminists, bioregionalists and ecotheologists come to this group as they plead for green consciousness.

As presented earlier, deep ecology emphasizes self-realization and biocentric equality. "Self-realization means identification with a larger organic "Self" beyond the individual person" (Dryzek 1987). The idea is to reach deep consciousness of organic unity, of the holistic nature of the ecological webs in which every individual is enmeshed. Similarly, for ecofeminists, the root of all environmental problems is not necessarily anthropocentrism but androcentrism. They see patriarchy as cultural rather than natural. The whole effort of ecofeminists is to bring a radical change in the mentality of males so that both women and nature are not suppressed.

Bioregionalism cultivates a sense of place. People who live in a bioregion need to adopt and treat it as their home so that the region in turn can sustain human health and life. Bioregional consciousness implies a kind of ecological citizenship. "Such citizenship involves awareness of how the ecosystem supports life, and of life's vulnerabilities. It involves meeting one's material as well as spiritual needs from the resources available locally" (Dryzek 1993). However, ecological citizenship is not necessarily associated with bioregionalism and obligations to place. Such a citizenship adopts green lifestyle in which people take organic food usually vegetarian.

Ecotheologists see ecological problems in spiritual terms and think that if the root of the problem is spiritual, so too must be the cure. Judeo-Christian religious tradition keeps God outside of nature, and man, as his image, above nature. This justifies man's exploitation to nature. Ecotheologists take St Francis of Assisi as the

patron saint of ecology: “I propose Francis as a patron saint for ecologists” (White 46). Assisi’s idea of “creation care” urges Christians to make “godly, just, and sustainable choices” (qtd. in Dryzek 194). Other ecotheologists are “inclined to give up Judaism and Christianity in favor of Taoism, Buddhism, and Hinduism, all of which cast humanity in far more humble terms, adopting a contemplative and reverential attitude toward nature” (Dryzek 194-95). Emerson, Thoreau and Whitman have also some influence mainly of Hinduism.

Other greens are more direct. They include green parties, social ecologists, eco-Marxists, environmental justice, and antiglobalization activities. These come under green politics group. Green radicalism finds its conventional form of organization in political parties. Green parties have made their visible appearance in the countries like Belgium, the Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, and Italy. The German Greens, *Die Grunen*, which were founded in 1980, occupy a central position (Dryzek 207). According to Dryzek, the German Green Party is divided into *Realo* and *Fundi*. *Realos* believe in action through the system. So they want to change the world by holding public positions through election. Unlike them, *Fundies* believe that the Greens are a social movement rather than a political party, and hence the Greens have to confront an irrelevant political system rather than work within it. So they emphasize individual consciousness.

Social ecology is associated with Murray Bookchin. For Bookchin, hierarchy is the root of all evil in human society and in human relationship with nature (Dryzek 209). For him nature is not the violent struggle for survival of the fittest. Instead, it is a cooperative place, a model for human society. Thus, for Bookchin, the alternative to the hierarchy and competition associated with modern state structures and capitalism



is small-scale, mostly self-sufficient local communities existing in harmony with their neighbors and with their local environment.

Transition towns and new materialism are a movement of local initiatives that began in 2005 in some towns of Ireland and England and grew to 500 towns worldwide. It is a reaction to the failure of national governments and global negotiations in confronting climate change. The movement promotes self-sufficiency, energy conservation, greenhouse gas emissions reduction, resilience in the face of environmental threats. Transition towns manifest a new, sustainable materialism concerned with how people relate to resources and nonhuman nature. New materialism practices redesign and re-localize production and distribution in participatory fashion (Dryzek 211).

Environmental justice movement started in the United States. It is concerned with the degree to which the environmental risks generated by environmental society fall on the poor and ethnic minorities. Initially the movement focused to the risks caused by toxic dumps, “but concern soon broadened to encompass nuclear facilities, waste incinerations, air and water pollution” (Dryzek 213). The movement opposes the risk management paradigm seeking instead to prevent the generation of risk.

Though this is not a clear division as green consciousness and green politics is just a matter of emphasis and in many cases they join to constitute a green public sphere, these two aspects of green radicalism represent the main options for any social movement. These make it apparent that prevailing anthropocentric mode of human and nature relationship need to be radically changed. Green movements aim to change both the way people think and so behave on the one hand, and social institutions and collective decisions on the other. Green cultural change can contribute greatly in maintaining ecological balance. From green radicalism we can also reason that

oppositional politics in the public sphere and social movements can play a key role in social learning, which does not need to be tied to conventional politics.

Such ecological discourses inform and shape environmental narratives which attempt to give the environment a voice and facilitate an aesthetic appreciation that is not anthropocentric. In "The Aesthetic of Unscenic Nature" Y. Saito states that through ecological discourses humans attempt a less anthropocentric viewpoint which aims:

to recognize its own reality quite apart from us and to suspend our exclusive pursuit for entertainment in nature. Instead of imposing our own standard of aesthetic value (such as pictorial coherence), we are willing to acknowledge and appreciate the diverse ways in which nature speaks. (103)

According to A. Carlson, as presented in "Aesthetic Appreciation of the Natural Environment", scientific knowledge encourages aesthetic appreciation of the environment which does not presuppose anthropocentrism. Ecological understandings and ways of looking at the active, frenetic, stimulating and diverse aspects of ecosystems increase aesthetic appreciation beyond sensory pleasure. Expanded knowledge of different natural environments and the myriad of interrelationships that exist within them point towards positive aesthetics where every component is naturally beautiful (Carlson 129). Similarly, Callicott maintains that understanding ecological interconnections can add to aesthetic appreciation. Aesthetic appreciation of all aspects of the environment stress the need to consider the unscenic elements of the environment, not just the visually striking. Cultural conditioning directs attention towards the pretty picturesque, but ecological understandings can point to "the way different parts of nature interact systematically" (Fudge 276). The inclusivity of

ecologically founded aesthetics means previously overlooked living beings and non-living objects can provide new opportunities for aesthetic experience.

Environmental ethics has played fundamental role in the development of ecocriticism. Deep ecology, intrinsic value judgment system, ecological aesthetics are related to environmental aesthetics one way or other. So it is necessary to make a thorough study of environmental ethics. For this there is *Environmental Ethics: An Anthology* edited by Andrew Light and Holmes Rolston III. The collection of classic articles give detailed knowledge about environmental ethics from its history to its present stands as well as to its future responsibilities and prospective.

The book presents thorough history of environmental ethics along with new paths and possibilities of scholarship on the field. It also takes up three of the central debates of environmental ethics: who counts in the environmental ethics? Should we include only animals or other species, plants and ecosystem as well in the ethics? Is nature intrinsically valuable, valuable in itself? Are there one or many ways of valuing nature? Then it states three alternative approaches to mainstream environmental ethics. They are deep ecology, ecofeminism and environmental pragmatism. All three alternatives argue that the classic historical debates started out on the wrong foot, or took wrong turns along the way. It also brings into focus concrete issues and specific cases. It presents environmental ethics “on the ground” with the thrust that an Earth ethics needs to get “down to earth.” Finally, it takes this concrete issue back toward a larger worldview: environmental ethics needs to place humans in their cultures significantly on their landscapes. Heise puts it: “To date, environmental-justice ecocriticism is the only branch of the field that has addressed globalization issues in any depth” (173).

Ecocriticism has changed dramatically from its inception. *Ecocriticism: The Essential Reader* edited by Ken Hiltner is an anthology of ecocritical articles that defend the field of ecocriticism in its first few decades, as well as new writings that are helping to redefine it today. There have appeared different digressions in the twenty-first century. Hiltner represents the digressions by dividing the collection into two parts in the model of Lawrence Buell as presented in *The Future of Environmental Criticism*: first-wave ecocriticism, articles on ecocriticism written till the end of the twentieth-century, second-wave ecocriticism: articles that represent the digressions then after.

Ecocriticism emerged in the 1970s by questioning anthropocentric ethics of giving human interest a central focus. The 1980s saw the enormous influence of the deep ecology movement that revolutionized human relationship to nature by giving the latter intrinsic worth, not higher or lower to human beings. In 1990s important works of ecocritics appeared in theorizing the canons of ecocriticism. Thus ecocritics up to the end of the twentieth-century were preoccupied with nature writing, wilderness, and texts celebrating pristine environments as that of Wordsworth and Thoreau. Hiltner collects articles showing this mode in the part as “First Wave Ecocriticism.” Important collections of this part are like Lynn White, Jr’s “The Historical Roots of our Ecologic Crisis,” Arn Naess’s “The Deep Ecological Movement: Some Philosophical Aspects,” Jonathan Bate’s “The Economy of Nature,” Lawrence Buell’s “Representing the Environment,” and Glotfelty’s “Literary Studies in an Age of Environmental Crisis.”

In the “Second-Wave Ecocriticism” articles that are mostly written after the twentieth century are collected. If the first-wave ecocriticism was preoccupied with pastoral or wilderness writing, the articles of the second-wave ecocriticism are more

directed toward a variety of landscape including cities and present environmental issues. The second wave ecocritics have taken up a range of issues. One of them is environmental justice. Though this was started in 1980s as a movement, it is continued in the second wave ecocriticism as well. Collected Robert D. Bullard's "Race, Class, and the Politics of Place" draws the attention of the ecocritics to concern the issues like race, class, gender, and sexual preference. Stacy Alimo and Susan Hekman's "Emerging Models of Materiality in Feminist Theory" explores the intersection between feminist concerns and environmental justice. Another important collection on this line is Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands and Bruce Erickson's essay on "Queer Ecologists."

Other second-wave ecocritics like Bruno Latour's "What is to be done? Political Ecology!" Timothy Morton's "Imagining Ecology without Nature," and Dana Phillip's "Expostulations and Replies" approach environmental issues from theoretical position. With the shifts in the second-wave ecocriticism, ecocriticism has acquired real cultural and political relevance. The editor thinks that future ecocriticism will move in the direction of the second-wave ecocriticism and it will influence other critical studies to have a "green" tint without being ecocritic (133).

David Pepper's *Modern Environmentalism: An Introduction* is an important book to know development of environmentalism. The book is basically an anatomy and history of the ideas about nature and environment that appeared in modern environmentalism both reformist or techno centric and radical or ecocentric. The book outlines the techno centric and ecocentric ideas and shows how they relate to different elements in the environment movement. Certain key environmentalist themes are examined to illustrate how environmentalism revives many issues and problems that are part of longer established political, economic, social and cultural debates: debates

which arose particularly during the nineteenth century and were essentially about the problems of modernism. The book then turns specifically to changing perceptions of society-nature relationships. It also outlines some elements of pre-modern thought about the place of humans in nature. It then describes the development of classical scientific world view, which largely displaced pre-modern cosmologies and still informs techno centric thinking about the environment today.

The book also describes roots of radical, eco-centric environmentalism that seem to lie mainly in late eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Then it considers how the very notion of science and scientific experts as neutral, objective authorities about nature has come under critical scrutiny, a trend which greens have sometimes eagerly seized on even though they themselves regard the science of ecology as embodying universal principles that all should follow. It intends to drive home the points made above concerning science as a principal part of our cultural filter, and how the ideas about nature which it conveys should not be divorced from their social, ideological context. Finally, it explores the questions of social change and how to establish the desired ecological society from different viewpoints within radical environmentalism.

Romantic movement played major role in diverting the attention of intellectuals towards nature. William Wordsworth played one of the major roles for it. *Romantic Ecology: Wordsworth and the Environmental Tradition* by Jonathan Bate is a book which presents Wordsworth's contribution in paving the way for modern environmentalism and ecocriticism. Bate intends to justify how and why Wordsworth tried to lead his readers towards looking and dwelling at nature for their happiness. He tries to recapture what Wordsworth did for the nineteenth century as he finds it relevant to what we need now. He thinks that Wordsworth not only initiated a

tradition of environmental consciousness but has had a vital influence on modern environmentalism.

The book affirms the importance of nature for Wordsworth; it examines his vision of pastoral and argues that there is not an opposition but continuity between his love of nature and his revolutionary politics. It historicizes the notion of ecology and finds important sources for it in romantic attitudes to the environment. It also examines Ruskin's reading of *The Excursion in Modern Painters* and argues that through Wordsworth Ruskin re-sacred nature. The underlying theme of the book is the belief that nature's sanctity, that an ecological ethic, must be reaffirmed in our contemporary structure of values. Finally, Bate explores the motif of place-naming as a way of finding identity by dwelling in the land. The book seems to be a preliminary sketch towards a literary ecocriticism.

Joni Adamson's *American Indian Literature, Environmental Justice, and Ecocriticism: the Middle Place* is also one of the important books to understand about environment and ecocriticism. The book takes a special interest in how writers and literary and cultural critics might employ their talents and training that will help us to understand and change the local, national, and global processes that give rise to social and ecological problems. The author takes a middle place between scholarship and her experience. She hopes that the book will expand the parameters of what is currently considered environmental literature and provide an orientation to literature that is more theoretically, multiculturally, and ecologically informed.

The book presents how the cultures and histories on those whose identity has been construed as "Other" imagine new stories that offer us the materials for a more inclusive environmentalism and a more multicultural ecocriticism. It examines how mainstream conceptions of "wilderness" and "nature" create blind spots in the

environmental movement that excuse us from thinking seriously about the consequences of our everyday activities in culture. It also examines why we must develop more multiculturally inclusive concepts of nature, justice, and place that are rooted not only in deep, reciprocal relationships to the natural world, but in our diverse cultural histories, in our different relationships to colonial oppression, and in the consequences of race and class marginalization.

*Beyond Nature Writing: Expanding the Boundaries of Ecocriticism* edited by Karla Armbruster and Kathleen R. Wallace is a collection of essays that delineate the expanding boundaries of the emerging field of ecocriticism. The essays included in the book chart some of the exciting directions that ecocriticism is currently taking and could take in the future. By demonstrating how elastic the permeable boundaries of this field can be, as a group these essays make a powerful argument for the depth, breadth, and rigor of an ecocritical approach for literary and cultural studies in general.

The essays address dominant religious, philosophical and literary traditions within Western culture through the Enlightenment. Perhaps because environmentalism as we know it today is so much a product of twentieth-century experiences, discoveries, and thinking and because nature appreciation in literature is often traced to the British romantics and Thoreau, most environmental history, philosophy, and criticism tends to characterize Western thought through the Enlightenment as profoundly anti-environmental and deeply invested in the notion of human beings as separate from and superior to nonhuman nature.

The essays of the second section explore the intersections of nature and culture in the works of eight well known nineteenth and twentieth century American and British authors. The authors intend to know what new light we can shed on their work



by attending to their representations of human relationships with nature. They employ the question what these authors, who are not nature writers in the traditional sense, can contribute to ecocriticism's ongoing attempt to theorize literary representations of the human-nature relationship.

By examining genres that may reach a wider audience than traditional nature writing, the essays of the last section do the important work of asking what kinds of textual messages are reaching the majority of people in our culture and what new issues the texts can raise for the practice of ecocriticism. By self-consciously reaching out to other genres and disciplines, the authors expand the range and power of ecocriticism.

*The Modern Tradition: Background of Modern Literature* edited by Richard Ellmann and Charles Feidelson is one of the important books to know about different concepts, trends and developments in modern literature. Modernism strongly implies some sort of historical discontinuity, either liberation from inherited patterns or, at another extreme, deprivation and disinheritance. A radically anti-cultural bias can be taken as the most important attribute of the modern imagination. Committed to everything inhuman experience that militates against custom, abstract order, and even reason itself, modern literature has elevated individual existence over social man, unconscious feeling over self-conscious perception, passion and will over intellection and systematic morals, dynamic vision over the static image, dense actuality over practical reality. In these and other ways, it has made the most of its break with the past, its inborn challenge to established culture. However, the book does not present a general theory of modernism but it represents the various factors that any theory will be obliged to take into account. The book sets out to describe the modern movement

with as much of its real complexity, and with as much depth in time and intellectual breadth.

The book is an anthology of extracts related to different topics of modern literature. The first section is centered in art itself: the concept of imagination, the autonomy of the work of art, formalism, the creative process, and heroic role of the artist. The second has to do with art as a function of environment: historical determinants and social action, the pressures of experience and the responsibility of truthfulness. In the third, "Nature", several romantic and post-romantic theories are represented – worlds of organic harmony, of biological struggle, of mechanistic force, and of human or scientific experiment. Under "Cultural History" are included both the theme of human freedom in historical experience and a number of patterns – dialectical, repetitive, symbolic, or religious – by which the historical process has been schematized.

The next two sections are concerned with non-intellectual modes of thought. In "The Unconscious" the center is Freudian psychology, but the topic also embraces pre-Freudian ideas of psychic energy and post-Freudian programs for the liberation of impulse. "Myth" includes both anthropological and Jungian versions of the myth-making mind, along with more properly literary doctrines of mythic imagination.

I have also collected and gone through different articles on ecocriticism published in different journals like *Global Ecological and Biography*, *South Atlantic Review*, *Environmental History*, and many others. The articles are like "Blues in the Green: Ecocriticism" by Michael P. Cohen, "Greening English: Recent Introductions to Ecocriticism" by Ursula Heise, "Ecocriticism and Science: Toward Consilience?" by Glen A. Love, "Ecocriticism and the Long Eighteenth Century" by Christopher Hitt, "Ecological Criticism Today" by Paul Lindholdt, "Kenneth Bruke: Pioneer of

Ecocriticism” by Laurence Coupe, “Ecocriticism, Literary Theory, and the Truth of Ecology” by Dana Phillips. These articles together give clear vision of the development and present situation of ecocriticism.

The discussion above has highlighted the understandings of ecocentrism that provide one of the components of the conceptual framework that underpins the textual analysis undertaken in Chapter 3,4 and 5. In summary those understanding include the following. Ecocentrism has an holistic focus on closely interconnected ecosystems. It is there by connected with ecological equality where humans are not privileged over any other environmental component. From a human perspective this is a difficult position to endorse practically because concepts of intrinsic value have traditionally been anthropocentrically grounded. However, ecological approaches to intrinsic value seek to allocate value to all species on their inherent ability to survive and adapt. As well, ecological approaches to aesthetics have focused on re-conceptualizing the sublime in terms of the unsceinc. Together, these two new approaches provide ways to envisage the possibility of representing a more fully ecocentric prospective. However, environmental ethics has still to learn how to fit the ecocentric views in harmony with human culture. This has been one of the important tasks of ecocentrism.

### **Methodological Review: Perspectives and Tropes in Ecocriticism**

In order to confirm a direction for my study within the field of ecocriticism, I have made scholarly studies of British and North American ecocritical literary criticism that reflect human and nature relationships. The critique provides direction and develops conceptual framework for the scholarly work under taken in Chapter 3, 4, and 5, which apply transdisciplinary methodological approach for ecocritical analysis.

My account of the ecocritical studies detects discernible traces of a shift in ecocritical methodologies: a shift which conforms to the transition in ecocriticism identified by Glotfelty and Lawrence Buell. The shift involves moving beyond acceptance of structuralist approaches to literary analysis, to the application of ecocritical methodologies informed by contemporary literary and cultural theories. Within the field of ecocriticism there can be found certain perspectives and tropes that are related to ecocritical methodologies.

### **Perspectives in Ecocriticism**

In the spectrum of ecocriticism, there appear three distinct perspectives. They are ecocritical perspective, ecofeminist perspective and post-colonial perspective. In the ecocritical perspective, human life is viewed completely from the ecological perspective. In the ecofeminist perspective, the whole western metaphysics is equated with males and females are equated with nature. Males are blamed for all kinds of disorders in all human, feminine and natural worlds. And in the post-colonial perspective, colonized regions and marginalized groups are equated with the suppressed nature and raised voices in defense.

### **Ecocritical Perspective: Opportunities for a Transdisciplinary Approach to Textual Analysis**

Ecocriticism resists orderly definitions. Ecocritical studies have been undertaken by a diverse community of scholars and consequently ecocriticism is neither a harmonious nor a unified field. Ecocriticism is also known as environmental criticism, literary-environmental studies, literary ecology, literary environmentalism, or green cultural studies (Buell, *Future* 11-12). Fundamental to ecocriticism is a commitment on the part of ecocritics to the physical world. As a scholarly movement, ecocriticism may be seen as a response by literary scholars to the escalating

environmental crises of the 1960s. At about the same time as socially conscious movements with regard to race, class, and gender were developing in cultural studies, ecocriticism gave voice to literary theorists who espoused environmental consciousness.

Ecocriticism in the first stage differed from post-modernism sharply in that it sought to redefine human beings not in the traditional way of defining them by excluding from the non-human world but by including it. It also critiqued the modern “presumption to know the natural world scientifically, to manipulate it technologically and exploit it economically, and thereby ultimately to create a human sphere apart from it in a historically process that is usually leveled “progress”” (Heise 167). Alternative to the modernity extend from deep ecology to social ecology. As described earlier, “Deep ecology foregrounds the value of nature in and of itself, the equal rights of other species, and the importance if small communities. Social ecology, by contrast, tends to value nature primarily in its human uses and has affinities with political philosophies ranging from anarchism and socialism to” (Heise 167). Since the late 1990s, ecocritical field has moved gradually from deep ecology to the social-ecological, positions that dominate ecocriticism today. From the turn of the century, environmental-justice criticism has influenced the field of environmental criticism “by drawing attention to social and racial inequalities in both access to natural resources and exposure to technological and ecological risk” (Heise 168). Derived from the idea of holistic and self-regenerative ecosystems, ecocriticism has catalyzed political, legal, and cultural changes that have benefited the environment and social welfare.

Dana Phillips’ *The Truth of Ecology: Nature, Culture ,and Literature in America* is an important book to know about critical views towards ecocriticism. He

takes principles and practices of ecocriticism as the “ecocritic’s epiphany”. He sums the propositions of ecocritics in three points: “(1) that nature, which is refreshingly simple, is good; and (2) that culture, which is tiresomely convoluted, is bad; or (3) at least not so good as nature” (3). So he sees more reflective than practical mode in ecocritics and hence moral and philosophical grandeur is dominant in them. For Phillips, “Devoting our time and energy to the perusal of environmental literature would seem to be a roundabout way for us to secure a bond with the earth: it’s as if we should spend our time poring over the personal ads, instead of striking up a conversation with the lonely heart next door” (7). He does not see any reason why the “ecocritic should be filled with a burning desire to save before the world: texts are disposable, whereas the world is not....the ecocritic’s epiphany is more self-revelatory than revelatory of the world: the world, that is, of both words and things” (11). He advises the ecocritics to be free of from their “fixation on literal representation, and shift its focus away from the epistemological to the pragmatic” (7).

*The Green Studies Reader: From Romanticism to Ecocriticism* edited by Laurence Coupe is a complete guide to the students of ecocriticism. It is an anthology of critical texts related to ecocriticism selected from romantic period to the present. They give in-depth and critical knowledge about the subject. They focus on the connection between ecology, literature and culture.

Green studies is not only concerned with the status of animals and plants and the need to give them justice, it is also concerned with the larger question of justice, of the rights of our fellow-creatures, of forests and rivers, and ultimately of the biosphere itself. To use nature as a ‘critical’ concept it brings two related senses. First, in invoking nature, it challenges the logic of industrialism, which assumes that nothing matters beyond technological progress. Second, in insisting that the non-

human world matters, it challenges the complacent culturalism which renders other species, as well as flora and fauna, subordinate to the human capacity for signification. It views that if green studies does not have an effect on this way of thinking, does not change behavior, does not encourage resistance to planetary pollution and degradation, it cannot be called fully ecocritical.

The book presents the Romantic critique of the Enlightenment's aspirations to human being's dominion and use of nature for human benefit. It critiques modernity. Destruction of individuality and social order in the Second World War created a profound sense of alienation in humans. Especially nature writers critiqued the modernity by showing the unified relationship with the earth. The book brings fresh insights of poets, philosophers, anthropologists, postmodern theorists regarding the confusion in the relationship between nature and culture in the twenty-first century. It also presents some principles of ecocriticism and environmental literary practices are also shown.

*The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* edited by Glotfelty and Fromm is an anthology of articles on ecocriticism. It is one of the most important books to know about what ecocriticism is and what to read to learn more about this approach to literary studies. The book presents history and scope of ecocriticism, and makes the readers familiar with its leading scholars.

The book brings theory that raises some fundamental questions about the relationship between nature and culture and provides a theoretical foundation which builds subsequent discussions to literary works. It studies representations of nature in fiction and drama, including reflections on the ecological significance of literary modes and narrative structures, from Paleolithic hunting stories to postmodern mystery novels. It also focuses on environmental literature in America, encompassing

both Native American stories and the Thoreauvian nature-writing tradition. Glotfelty identifies three stages in the development of ecocriticism: (i) scrutinizing images of nature to raise awareness of stereotypes; (ii) investigating writing that manifests ecological awareness; (iii) developing theoretical frameworks for their work, for example, ecofeminism (xxiii-xxiv).

Whereas Glotfelty classifies the evolution of ecocriticism as stages, Lawrence Buell in his *The Future of Environmental Criticism*, allocates as two waves. In the 'first wave' there come early tendencies to focus on the pastoral/wilderness canon; biographical studies of nature writers; regional studies; generic studies, for example, poetry from a particular time such as the Romantic period. As well, in this first wave of ecocriticism, ecocritics collected and edited anthologies of nature writing of revisited literary works to reinterpret them from a perspective of environmental awareness. In the 'second wave', the ecocritical lens was expanded to include urban as well as rural environments, ecofeminism, environmental justice and the profound impact of humanity on the environment as depicted in contemporary texts (Buell, *The Future* 22-23). In the "Foreword" of *Environmental Criticism for the Twenty-First Century*, Lawrence Buell presents the core of the whole ecocritical practices in a single sentence: "Questions of place-attachment and place-(re)construction have been central to ecocriticism since the movement's inception, but the high valuation it initially set on local or bioregional allegiances has been seriously roiled by its recent engagement with postcolonial and "ecocosmopolitan" models of thinking, most influentially Ursula Heise's *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet* (2008)" (xvi).

Common to these two accounts of the historical paths, ecocriticism is an awareness of a move from formalist approaches, with their emphasis on studying the text in isolation, to the development of a more critical approach, conscious of the



cultural forces that shape, and to some extent are influenced by, the text. Fellow scholars of ecocriticism like Lawrence Buell, Michael P. Cohen, N. Easterlin, J. Levin, Dana Phillips have made some strong critical appraisal of ecocritical studies. Of these critiques, by far the most strident has been leveled by Dana Phillips. In *The Truth of Ecology: Nature, Culture, and Literature in America*, Phillips accuses ecocritics of: wishing to escape from academic constraints; fixating on the pastoral; scorning literary theory because of its distance from realism thus rehabilitating ideas of texts as mimetic representations of reality; espousing interdisciplinarity to strengthen literary criticism but in effect weakening it; and having overly ambitious aims for the role of literature in contributing to environmental protection and restoration. Though it is not appropriate to represent Phillips' argument in its entirety here, nor is it possible here to refute it by citing examples from ecocritical studies, it is necessary to take account of these shortcomings when drawing upon ecocriticism to develop my methodological framework.

Consequently, the accounts of ecocriticism proffered by Phillips, together with those produced by Lawrence Buell and Glotfelty, contribute to the methodological approach for this study in the following ways. My study takes Phillips' challenges into account as it avoids the structuralist approaches to the analysis of tropes. It also incorporates poststructuralist perspectives and thereby is situated within Glotfelty's third stage and Lawrence Buell's second wave of ecocriticism. This transdisciplinary approach to textual analysis of ecologically or environmentally themed literary texts locates my study firmly within the field of contemporary ecocriticism. Through its transdisciplinarity, the study embarks upon new theoretical territory in its examination of ecological subjectivities constructed within texts and the subject positions available to readers.

### **Ecofeminist Perspectives: Refutation to Androcentrism**

Ecofeminism, as a field of environmental ethics, applies feminist theories to the interpretation of human interactions with the environment, and emphasizes the examination, disruption and replacement of patriarchal world views. K. J. Warren, as put in "Ecofeminism: Introduction", contends that ecofeminist approaches decry the androcentric practices, that, some ecofeminists claim, have contributed to the environmental crisis. New ways of living with the environment that do not involve patriarchal oppression are envisaged. However, ecofeminist understandings cannot be regarded as a homogeneous cluster offering a unified perspective, for disparate understandings of the association between the patriarchal oppression of women and their correspondence with androcentric environmental relationships exist.

Ecofeminism is, therefore, a slippery and unstable field. Ecofeminist approaches to text, like feminist readings of texts, problematize dualisms that generate beliefs in the superiority or dominance of one item when it is placed in opposition to another than regarded as inferior and subservient. An interest in the binaries of male/female with their culturally associated beliefs is extended to the interrogation of other binaries associated with human interactions with the environment.

In *Main Currents in Western Environmental Thought*, Hay contends that Ecofeminist examination of binaries includes their application in the fields of science and ecology. Binaries such as living/non-living, human/animal, promote beliefs in the dominance and superiority of the primary term. In place of dichotomous concepts favored by science such as subject/object, knower/known, Hay suggests, perhaps in a totalizing way, that ecofeminists favor ideas of union, engagement, and empathy. Waugh points out, "Beliefs that legitimate the oppression of women also legitimate

the environmental degradation. This is the ecofeminism's key insight" (538). It could be argued that such ideas are more in keeping with ecological awareness.

Figurative language, particularly metaphor and metonymy, constructs associations between the environment and living entities. Since the 1980s, ecofeminists have drawn to the feminization of the environment through metaphors and "essential" female metonymic associations with the environment.

### **Postcolonial Perspectives: Voice of the Marginalized**

Postcolonial criticism enables different approaches to textual analysis by taking into account the marginalization of voices and perspectives of those who do not conform to Eurocentric or Western norms and practices. According to Howarth, as presented in "Some Principles of Ecocriticism", "postcolonial studies have a strong regional emphasis, but they dwell on political or cultural spaces rather than their physical environs" (80). Even then, ecocritical approach can be strengthened and enriched by the inclusion of postcolonial methodologies as these explore relationships between social constructions of culture and land use and abuse.

In *Orientalism* Said argues that a Eurocentric universalism takes for granted a hierarchy or superior European way of informing the rest. A postcolonial reading, therefore, examines texts with regard to how binaries are constructed, particularly the binaries colonialism was built on: colonial (civilized) in opposition to colonized (primitive, barbaric). Beyond an examination of binaries are the ways in which subject positions are created, how non-aboriginal readers are positioned to align themselves with aborigines; how aboriginal relationships with the environment are represented alongside non-aboriginal relationships with the environment; how aboriginal people are constructed as subjects, for example, as non-homogeneous groups.

C. Bradford in *Reading Race: Aboriginality in Australian Children's*

*Literature* suggests criteria for the examination of texts written by Indigenous writers. This includes structuring texts to determine if: aboriginal discourses are used, therefore, (re)attributing value to indigenous languages; subjectivities are formed within and between cultures: the complexity of subjectivities is foreground rather than treating aboriginal experiences as homogeneous (Bradford).

Val Plumwood in "Decolonizing Relationship with Nature" argues that the western definition of humanity depended on the presence of the 'non-human': the uncivilized, the animal and animalistic (63). Postcolonial ecocriticism- like several other modes of ecocriticism- performs an advocacy function to contemplate on how such a real world might be transformed. For this it produces a kind of 'protest literature'. Robert Young defines post colonialism as "a politics and philosophy of activism that contests the disparity [between western and non-western cultures/ peoples], and so continues in a new way the anti-colonial struggles of the past" (4). Young feels the need for epistemic decolonization of the mind. Postcolonial ecocriticism is broadly eco-socialist in inspiration. The book intends to show how postcolonial writers have adapted environment discourses, which have, in their view, often been shaped in western interests, to their own immediate ends. It has also presented the knowledge of non-western societies and cultures, which has been part of the postcolonial critical project.

*Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment* by Grahm

Huggan and Helen Tiffin brings postcolonial and ecological issues together as a means of challenging continuing imperialist modes of social and environmental dominance. Divided into two parts, the first part presents the intersections of postcolonial and environmental issues. It argues that one of the central tasks of

postcolonial ecocriticism to date has been to contest western ideologies of development related to ecocriticism. It has emphasized post colonized communities' sense of their own cultural identities and entitlements, which often represent the ontological basis for their territorial claims to belong. The literary mode this section focuses is pastoral. Another section looks at the history of pastoral representation.

The second part of the book shifts from ecocritical to zoocritical focus. It considers the impact and legacies of colonialist asset stripping, colonial discourse, and Christian missioning. It presents the role of Christianity –particularly the Bible –in colonization, as well as responses to Christian interpellation that marginalizes women and animals. Finally, it brings questions of animal and human agency, cross-species contact including sexuality, and clashes between human and animal interests in postcolonial contexts.

Rob Nixon's "Environmentalism and Postcolonialism" is an important article to understand environmentalism and postcolonialism. Nixon finds mainly four differences between them. First, postcolonialists tend to foreground hybridity and cross-culturation. But ecocritics focus to the discourses of purity: virgin wilderness and preservation of nature. Second, postcolonial writing and criticism concerns with displacement, while environmental criticism gives priority to the literature of place. Third, post-colonial studies tend to favor cosmopolitan and transnational and are critical of nationalism. The canons of environmental literature are nationalistic in nature. Fourth, postcolonialism pays attention to reimagining the marginalized past: "history from below and border histories, often along trans-national axes of migrant memory." By contrast, environmental literature "is often repressed or subordinated to the pursuit of timeless, solitary moments of communion with nature" (197).

### **Environmental Tropes: Focus of the Earlier Studies**

Environmental tropes contribute to the ways in which we understand nature. From the scholarly studies of the nature related writings, I provide an important mapping of the directions taken, and theoretical perspectives used by the scholars. The subject positions offered vary, for example, if the environment is represented metaphorically as female, or as a resource. In this regard, four major environmental tropes are discerned in nature writing: the pastoral, wilderness, georgic, and apocalypse.

These four literary tropes are indebted to Western ways of understanding and engaging with the environment. In *Ecocriticism*, Garrard states that pastoral, wilderness and apocalypse form "a linked series of tropes that are heavily indebted to the Euro-American, Judeo-Christian narrative of a fallen, exiled humanity seeking redemption, but fearing apocalyptic judgment" (15). The georgic, with its emphasis on strategies for agricultural production and animal husbandry also derives from Eurocentric understanding.

#### **Pastoral**

The pastoral trope constructs notions of contrast between rural and urban life, often a presentation of a retreat made by the protagonist to a pristine, bountiful, and retrospective environment before his/her return. The pastoral trope foregrounds an environment which is pristine, abundant, and bucolic. Depictions of humanity's relationship with such environments have been presented through the pastoral trope since classical times. Both the *Idylls* of Theocritus and Virgil's *Eclogues* depict the desirability of a retreat from an urban environment to a rural environment which will provide a restorative escapade or antidote to urbanity (Bate *The Song of the Earth* 73-74; Garrard 34). The poetry of Wordsworth and others of the Romantic Movement

also depicts the contrasts between relationships of alienation in urban environments and relationships of renewal in contact with a rural environment (Bate *The Song of the Earth* 146). Characteristic spatial metaphors identified in this trope include the city as "frenetic, corrupt, impersonal" and the country as "peaceful, abundant" (Garrard 35). The metaphors reinforce the popular conceptions of the restorative capacity of rural environments and the deleterious effects of an urban environment and serve to perpetuate representations of dichotomous relationships between city and country.

In a similar vein, temporal metaphors pertaining to past, present and future suggest a looking back with longing for something lost, or the celebration of a bountiful present, and the looking forward to redeemed future (Garrard 37). For Glean A. Love, the pastoral trope fulfils a perceived psychological need of readers towards *biophilia*, that is, love for country life. The pastoral therefore "can be a serious and complex criticism of life, involved not merely with country scenes and natural life but with a significant commentary on the explicit or implicit contrast between such settings and the lives of an urban and sophisticated audience" (Love 66). Key elements of the pastoral, the retreat and return refreshed are of interest for their potential to construct ecological subjectivities. The characters participating in such a holiday, for example, might have ecological interests suggested by eco-tourism or they may have less up-to-date concerns, and consider their holiday environment from a purely selfish anthropocentric perspective.

### **Wilderness**

Like the pastoral, texts employing the wilderness trope conceive of one environmental as antidote for another. The "motif of escape and return" is common to both tropes (Garrard 39). But where pastoral texts depict the antidotal environmental as bountiful and harmonious, the wilderness trope posits an environment of excess

and extremes, one that is chaotic and complex rather than simple and balanced (Love). The wilderness trope, therefore, offers two contrasting opportunities for human characters, acceptance of which will facilitate redemption. Firstly, characters can be challenged by the environment which is represented as difficult and threatening opponent. Secondly, characters can be filled with a sense of wonder at the environment's overwhelming potential. This second option is evident in British and North American Romantic texts.

Other associations emerge within the wilderness trope. A wilderness environment can be either "sojourned in" or "inhabited" (Garrard 76). Citing comparisons between the writings of Thoreau, Muir, Abbey, and Austin, Garrard claims that women writers are more likely to present immersion in the landscape rather than confrontation with it (76).

### **Georgic**

The georgic is perhaps the least well known of the four tropes examined here. It is related to the affection of the farmer to his farm. It has more serious implications particularly with regard to contemporary concerns for agricultural practices and how these can ensure human and environmental survival in the future.

For Garrard, the works of notable American writer (and farmer) Wendell Berry provide an example of contemporary georgic. Berry's poetry, fiction and essays reflect an ethic of stewardship that is based on the principle of "usufruct", that is, the temporary use and care of the environment which takes into account the needs of future generations (Garrard 114). While critical of Berry's privileging of patriarchal, white, male farmers, Garrard, nevertheless, contends that Berry's use of figurative devices depicts human relationships with the environment that are both intricate and intimate (115-120). It shows the potentiality for georgic to be reworked within a



framework of contemporary stewardship of the environment where the good farming principles espoused in the georgic demand individual or community responsibility for the future.

### **Apocalypse**

Apocalypse is shaped by representations of death, war, pestilence and famine, as depicted in the biblical Book of Revelation. According to A. Free, as presented in "Moonlit Revelations: The Discourses of the End in Gina: B. Nahai's Moonlit on the Avenue of Faith", the apocalypse can be understood as "a foreshadowing or a revelation regarding the end of the world" (35). Similarly, Weaver states that in popular use, the trope may also suggest widespread destruction. The trope therefore brings into play an unveiling of possible endings which may include destruction in the form of: transformed human relationships with the environment through dramatic environmental changes that are uncondusive to human life; profound changes to human beings as they are forced to adapt to altered environmental conditions; and the subsequent disintegration of the social, political and economic characteristics of Western contemporary life.

Within apocalyptic narratives, according to O'Leary (as cited in Garrard 87), alternative forms of acceptance, tragic and comic, exist which have an impact on representations of time, agency, authority, and crisis. In the tragic form, time is conceived as predetermined, and humans accept the inevitability of a catastrophic conclusion. Denied free will, humans are propelled towards the end. With evil conceptualized as guilt, and redemption achievable through sacrifice and victimage, the focus in the tragic frame of apocalypse is on death. The comic form, on the other hand, conceptualizes evil as error, redemption as recognition of this, time as open ended and episodic, and human agents as "real but flawed" (Garrard 87-88). Here

hope of survival is offered through human agency, the acknowledgement of mistakes, and the ability to act to redress wrongdoing. However, with environmental disasters becoming regular occurrences around the world, apocalypse might be reconceptualized as a daily confrontation rather than a future event.

The discussion above has examined how environmental tropes may be regarded as genres or "sets of conventions and expectations that differentiate one type of text from another" (Culler 72). It highlights the potential of the four major tropes to establish conventions of behaviors with the environment. Though the tropes help in understanding how we take nature, from the ecocritical perspective, they are all faulty in some respect. "Pastoral and wilderness tropes typically imply the perspective of the aesthetic tourist, while the apocalypse encodes the vision of a prophetic imagination" (Garrard 108). Georgic is not transient state. But it is also past oriented as it implies the long-term imbrications of humans in a landscape of memory, ancestry and death, of ritual and work.

Greg Garrard's *Ecocriticism* is an important book to know about the important tropes that are widely used in ecocritical writings. The book also provides developments in the field of ecocriticism today. It introduces what ecocriticism is, when it started and who and what played role for this. It also brings brief account of the various political and philosophical orientations within the broad spectrum of environmentalism. He does so to make it clear that no single or simple perspective unites all ecocritics. Garrard arranges the analysis under the names of important ecocritical tropes, starting with 'Pastoral' and concluding with the construction of the 'Earth' as unified whole.

Important ecocritical tropes Garrard uses are 'pastoral', 'wilderness', 'apocalypse.' Garrard examines a linked series of the tropes that are heavily indebted

to the Euro-American Judaeo Christian narrative of a fallen, exiled humanity seeking redemption, but fearing apocalyptic judgment and assess the significance of the shapes these tropes have acquired in the modern world. He compares two quite distinct conceptions of 'dwelling' upon the Earth: the European 'georgic' tradition of writing about working the land, and the more recent identification of indigenous ways of life as potential models for a harmonious existence. Garrard looks at the different ways in which animals, wild and domestic, are represented and conceptualized. He argues that reconsideration of the idea of 'the human' is a key task for ecocriticism, tending to drag it away from pastoral and nature writing towards postmodern concerns such as globalization and 'cyborg' interfaces of humans with technology. Finally, he explores the meanings that have clustered around the extraordinary images of the whole Earth from space, ranging from global marketplace to precious super organism.

Garrard traces the development of the trope historically and, in some cases geographically. He mixes discussion of canonical texts and critics with more marginal materials in order to indicate the depth and breadth that the field has already assumed. The chapters follow a rough trajectory from traditional concerns with the local to contemporary concepts of the global: from place to space, from earth to Earth. Throughout the book he returns to the implications of postmodern ecology for ecocriticism.

R. John Knott's *Imagining Wild America* presents the evolution of the ways of imagining wilderness and wildness in America. Wilderness is a place, and wildness a quality. Knott wrote this from the influence of two American opposing practices. First is the American tradition of valuing and wanting to experience wilderness. And another is their tradition of valuing natural areas primarily for the resources that can be extracted from them for human use. However, the former influence has acquired

major space whereas the latter has played no less important role though mostly in implied way.

Knott has presented six well known American naturalists who messed themselves with nature during and after their studies of wilderness. These figures are John James Audubon, Henry David Thoreau, John Muir, Edward Abbey, Wendell Berry and Mary Oliver. They represent different stages and dimensions of the American fascination with “wilderness and wildness”. These lovers of nature in common one way or other have presented nature as desirable and manifestation of the sublime.

The main purpose of Knott in this book is to divert the attention of the best writers to imagine wild America, stimulated by various kinds of encounters with the natural world. Wilderness was “tonic” for Thoreau and, in varying ways, for the other writers who have been discussed in the book. With the exception of Audubon, all of them reveal an attraction to the idea of wilderness to which they take as a more fundamental and pervasive ideal.

Knott makes an argument that American tradition of writing about wilderness and wildness is in some respect a visionary tradition that embraces values consciously understood to be a historical, not necessarily related to cultural evolution. They offer visions of an ideal nature. So they reveal an extraordinary desire for an intimate connection with natural settings that they explore and in some cases inhabit. They explore natural world with their conviction as “pay attention” with alertness and receptivity to the unexpected and the strange that make discovery possible. The ecocritical method they fore-light is that nature is not to be used but to be experienced which gives insight of the sublime.

### **Other Environmental Tropes: Ways of Knowing and Engaging**

Ecocriticism has also been preoccupied with other environmental tropes. Some critics have viewed environmental metaphors as figurative devices, richly creative ways of representing the environment privileged by writers for colorful literary effect. Other critics have looked at conventional environmental metaphors as a means for denaturalizing taken-for-granted ways of knowing and emerging with the environment.

Environmental metaphors have evolved historically to suit changing times and purposes. Many of the critics have investigated metaphors for nature. In *The Aesthetics of Environment* Arnold Berleant posits,

Nature, in the sense of the earth apart from human interventions, has mostly disappeared. We live in a world profoundly affected by human action, not just in the nearly complete destruction of the planet's primeval wilderness or in the distribution of flora and fauna far from their original habitats, but in the alteration of the shape and character of the earth's surface, its climate, its very atmosphere. (166-167)

The environment is conceptualized as encompassing nature. However, in contexts where the environment was not conceptualized as such, the word nature is more appropriate to use.

### **Environment as Female**

The paradigmatic Western trope associated with the environment continues to be that of the female. This gendered metaphorical representation has provided a productive field of study for ecofeminists, whose viewpoints connect environmental degradation with the patriarchal domination and oppression of women. In general it

could be argued that female metaphor is the predominant environmental metaphor because Indo-European languages tend to gender the physical world as female.

Nature, especially the earth, was indentified as the organic unity, a nurturing mother, till Middle-ages. In this view nature was looked as “a kindly beneficent female who provided for the needs of mankind in an ordered, planned universe” (Merchant 10). However, another opposing image of nature as female was also prevalent. In this image, nature as female was viewed as wild and uncontrollable nature that could render violence, storms, droughts, and general chaos. This second image, nature as disorder, gave rise to important idea of using power over nature. “Two new ideas, those of mechanism and of the domination and mastery of nature, became core concepts of the modern world” (Merchant 10). Western world mentality increasingly mechanized in the 1600s either eliminated or used female principles in an exploitative manner.

However, Kate Soper contends that coding nature as female is not just Western but universal, apparently through association with nature's reproductive capacities. If thought of as female, acceptance of the metaphor belies the ambiguous understandings of human interactions with the environment that ensue. For instance, Soper claims that the female metaphor identifies the environment with a body of scientific laws, principles, and processes. The environment is, therefore, understood as an object of scientific scrutiny and experimentation. The gender metaphor is extended when understandings of the environment as a sexual object are prompted by spatial associations that link female metaphors of the environment with physical territory. Understood in both these ways the environment may be realized as a seductress, "the potential spouse of science, to be wooed, won, and if necessary forced to submit intercourse" or a "source of erotic delight", in the sense of territory that can

be penetrated, tamed and tilled (Soper 141). However, further semantic tension arises when the environment is represented, metonymically, in line with the Romantic tradition as mother.

Metonymic associations with the female representing the environment as mother and sexual object are noted by Annette Kolodny in her ecofeminist reading of early American pastoral texts that document the European settlement of America. In "Unearthing History: An Introduction" Kolodny suggests that as part of the settlement of America, daily life was determined by metaphors of "the land as essentially feminine –that is, not simply the land as mother, but the land as woman, the total female principle of gratification –enclosing the individual in an environment of receptivity, repose, and painless and integral satisfaction" (171). Beyond the settlers' initial experience of a mother's embrace on arrival, lay the despoliation of the "virgin" land, as the settlers colonized, industrialized and urbanized the environment. Soper has realized these dual impulses as the "impulse to dominate and the impulse to be nurtured" (142). Women are often seen as closer than men to nature because of their elements of reproduction and nurturing children. Care, empathy, intuition, connection and cooperation are female virtues. Thus, many ecofeminists cultivate the myth of a female "angel in the ecosystem" (Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mystery of Nature* 9).

Beyond these variations of the female metaphor, but aligned to them, as viewed by M. Lenz in "The Twenty-first Century as Place of Choice: Peter Deckinson's *Eva, the Lion and the Unicorn*," is the representation provided by the Gaia metaphor. Often, thought of as akin to the metaphor of the female/mother earth because of its nominal association with the ancient Greek Earth-goddess, Gaia is the metaphor of the environment as a holistic entity. The metaphor is derived from James Lovelock's hypothesis of the earth as one living organism, alive, dynamic, and

interdependent. In *Romantic Ecology*, Bate views that Wordsworth's "Lines Written a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey" pre-empt the Gaia hypothesis in its recognition that the Wye valley is a part of "a single vast living, breathing ecosystem" (146-147).

### **Environment as Spiritual Entity**

Metaphors coupled with the spiritual qualities of the environment abound in the works of the British Romantic poets. The whole philosophy of American transcendentalists is based on the spirituality of nature. Similarly in children's literature, the environment is depicted through metaphors of spirituality and iconicity. In *Freckles* by Gene Stratton-Porter, the environment is presented as the spirit of God (A. K. Phillips 1994/95). In both Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows* and Hodgson's *The Secret Garden*, the environment has "a quail-religious mysticism" (Darcy 214). As shown in the first and third chapters, the whole effort of American transcendentalism, Emerson as its proponent, is to show spiritual quality of nature, which is supposed to bear essence, truth, God, or wisdom.

### **Environment as Moral Guide**

Linked closely with the metaphor of the environment as source of spirituality is the concept of the environment as moral guide or teacher, the dominant metaphor in both Rousseau's *Emile* and the works of Mary Wollstonecraft (Sigler). The whole effort of American transcendentalists is to convince the public to lead life from the moral principles of nature.

More than likely, the harsh climatic conditions have also predicated the use of the metaphor of the environment as opponent or aggressor. As Foster, Finnis and Nimón note: "The bush has its reputation as an inhospitable, if not downright dangerous place to venture into. ... In place of suggestions that the bush will nurture are assertions that it will do no such thing. Instead of security and glorious productive



isolation, there is uncertainty, stress, menace and alienation” (81). What Foster, Finnis and Nimon are not acknowledging in this instance is their Western viewpoint. They are disregarding indigenous knowledge that may interpret the bush in other ways.

### **Environment as Resource or Artefact**

In contrast to conceptualizing the environment through metaphors of sacredness, sagacity, or aggression are notions of the environment as resource, or artefact. The classic, North American children's text based on the metaphor of environment as resource is *The Lorax* by Dr. Seuss. The silky threads of the truffula trees provide the entrepreneurial Once-ler with the perfect resource for making the useless garment, "thneed". The large scale production of these garments eradicates the truffula trees, and creates a toxic environment incapable of supporting the Swomee-Swans, or the Humming-Fish.

### **Living Creatures as Human Beings**

One of the earliest stories about non-domesticated animals appearing as protagonists with human qualities occurred in *Aesop's Fables*, created by Aesop, a slave and story teller. In children's literature, towards the end of the nineteenth century, the British, European, and North American writers such as Beatrix Potter, Kenneth Grahame, Rudyard Kipling, Selma Lagerlof and Gene Stratton-Porter used personification of wild animals as a device to persuade their readers to adopt positive attitude towards the conservation of animals and their habitats (Copeland). The shaping influence of the use of this trope lies not only in overt expressions of personification such as animals wearing clothes or living in "furnished" habitats, but also in the animal protagonists' ability to think, feel, communicate, and behave as humans. When texts for children are narrated or focalized through a personified

animal character, readers are likely to be aligned with the subjective experience of the characters of the text's subject positions.

Native Americans still live connected to the nurturing womb of mythology. They believe that mysterious but real power dwells in nature –in mountains, rivers, rocks, even pebbles. The world of myth is a dramatic world –a world of actions, of forces, of conflicting powers. In every phenomenon of nature it sees the collision of these powers.

Richard Erdoes and Alfonso Ortiz's *American Indian Myths and Legends* represents the American tradition of venerating nature. It is a collection of myths and legends of North American Indians which have been told for thousands of years. They arise out of the earth. They are imbedded in the ancient languages and flow according to the rhythms of the natural world.

The legends are not told merely for enjoyment, or for education, or for amusement: they are believed. So the recorded legends are emblems of living religion, giving concrete form to a set beliefs and traditions that link people living today to ancestors from centuries and millennia past.

Joseph Carroll's *Literary Darwinism: Evaluation, Human Nature and Literature* is an important book to formulate proper understanding of the connection between human nature and nature of literary art. In this book Carroll has argued against the concept of the autonomy of social science to innate human nature by applying Darwinian evolutionary theory.

In the second decade of the twentieth century, an anti-Darwinian social science became the dominant public of the century. Social theorists such as Emile Durtheim, Fronz Boas, Alfred Kroeber, and Robert Lowie propounded the doctrine that culture is an autonomous agency that produces all significant mental and

emotional content in human experience. This cultural perspective did not give any credit to innate nature as the determining factors for human motive or thoughts. Until 1970s this remained as the dominant cornerstone of standard social science, and Darwinism essentially disappeared from professional social science.

Carroll has spent whole of his energy in this book to criticize this model of cultural autonomy in building up human behavior. He has done so from the prospective of adaptationist social science which is emerged from the Darwinian social science. Unlike the cultural autonomy model, adaptationist model takes “the adapted mind” as the foundation of human culture (Carroll vii). Adaptationist social scientists take human nature as “a biologically constrained set of cognitive and motivational characters” (Carroll vii). They think that human nature is both the source and subject of literature. The collected sixteen essays together give clear concept of human mind: its motivating forces, its nature, its roles and functions in the creation of cultural values and its connection with art and literature.

There are some other major critical texts on art and ecocriticism like *Environmental Criticism for the Twenty-First Century* Edited by Stephanie LeMenager, Teresa Shewry and Ken Hiltner; Derek Wall’s *Earth First ! and the Anti-Roads Movement: Radical Environmentalism and Comparative Social Movements*; David Sujuki and Peter Knudtson’s *Wisdom of the Elders; Nature in Asian Traditions of Thought* edited by J. Baird Callicott and Roger T. Ames; *The Nature of Cities* edited by Michael Bennett and David W. Teague; *Environmental Values in American Culture* by Willett Kempton et al; John Benson’s *Environmental Ethic: An Introduction With Readings*; *Ecofeminist Literary Criticism: Theory, Interpretation, Pedagogy* by Greta Gaard and Patrich D. Murphy; *The Truth of Ecology* by Dana Phillips; Ralph Waldo Emerson’s *Essays and Poems* selected by Tony Tanner;

*Comprehensive Biography and Critical Analysis of Henry David Thoreau* by Harold Bloom. There are different websites like [www. bookfi. org](http://www.bookfi.org) [www; joster. org](http://www.joster.org) in which important books and articles on required subjects can be found.

Undoubtedly, all the critical works reviewed acknowledge that environmental tropes are pervasive and persuasive and help to shape human understanding of the environment and responses to it. They also help determine the ideologies inscribed in the tropes and know how the tropes work to construct ecological subjectivities.

### **Textual Review**

Emerson, Thoreau and Whitman hold special positions in the generation and development of American transcendentalism. The selected texts, *Nature* of Emerson, *Walden* of Thoreau and *Leafs of Grass* of Whitman are their major works. The books have caught the whole thrust of the related writers. In their whole career they tried to explore the subjects they have presented in these books and poems. Review of the books and articles related to these books and American transcendentalism has been made.

Michael McLoughlin's *Dead Letters to the New World: Melville, Emerson, and American Transcendentalism* is an important book to know about American transcendentalism and its major writers. It presents contribution of Emerson in the emergence of transcendentalism, a different philosophical base from European, especially English, which had a dominant influence on American literature, and thought. However, the book also shows how transcendentalism could not be applied by common people and how it lost its grip in the literati.

There are articles on American transcendentalism. They give clear picture of transcendentalism and how it easily won the hearts of American people. There are also articles on important transcendental writers like Emerson, Thoreau, and

Whitman. The articles on Emerson show how Emerson is a transcendentalist, what contributions he made for American transcendentalism, and how he is different from his immediate followers like Thoreau. Similarly, articles on Thoreau reveal how Thoreau became one of the leading figures in the field of American transcendentalism and what his contributions are for humanity and American reformation.

*Ralph Waldo Emerson: A Literary Reference to His Life and Work* by Tiffany K. Wayne gives a comprehensive knowledge about Emerson. It presents Emerson's biography, his works and related people, places and topics. The book is very much useful as there is not only links related to his works including *Nature* but also their critical commentaries.

*Emerson, Romanticism, and Intuitive Reason: The Transatlantic "Light of all our day"* by Patrick J. Keane is another important book on Emerson. This book has been useful for my studies mainly to know about his theory of intuitive reason. Divided into four parts and 14 chapters, first and second parts are more useful. Chapters like "Intuitive Reason: The Light of All Our Day", "Intuition and Tuition: Reading Nature and the Use and Abuse of Books" are important for my studies.

*Blooms Modern Critical Views: Ralph Waldo Emerson* edited by Harold Bloom also gives important critical views about Emerson. It is a collection of articles on the works and views of Emerson. Articles like "Emerson: The American Religion", "Emerson and the Work of Melancholia", "Self Reliance and Life of the Mind" are very important articles to know about the philosophical views of Emerson.

Lawrence Buell's *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing and Formation of Nature Culture* is one of the important books to study human and nature relationship. It shows how literature represents natural environment. By making Thoreau's *Walden* as a focal point, Buell has presented a "far-reaching

account of environmental perception”, the place of nature in the history of western thought, and the consequences for literary scholarship of attempting to imagine a more ‘ecocentric’ way of being. In doing so, he provides a major new understanding of Thoreau’s achievement and, at the same time, a profound rethinking of literary and cultural reflections on nature.

To study green tradition in American writing, Buell studies environmental non-fiction from colonial times to the present. In them he examines environmental themes such as the dream of relinquishment, the personification of the earth, the attentiveness to environmental cycles, a devotion to place, and awareness of possible ecocatasrophe. *Walden* is taken as the centre of the quest for greater environmental awareness. He develops a new vision of environmental writing and seeks a new way of conceiving the relation between human imagination and environmental actuality in the age of industrialization. Intricate and challenging in its arguments, and engagingly and elegantly written, *The Environmental Imagination* is a major work of scholarship, one that establishes a new basis for the reading of nature writing.

*Henry David Thoreau* by Harold Bloom is an important book to understand about Thoreau and his *Walden*. There are four critical articles on him beside the introduction given by Bloom. All of them have been very useful for my research.

*The Transcendentalist Constant in American Literature* by Roger Asselineau is also a helpful book about American transcendentalism. The book is mostly on Whitman. Asselineau writes in the preface that Whitman succeeded better than Emerson in transmuting the disincarnate concepts of transcendentalism into poems of flesh and blood. According to him, Whitman "believed in both in roots and the reality" (vi).

*The Pragmatic Whitman: Reimagining American Democracy* by Stephen John Mack is another important book about Whitman. Democratic freedom is one of the main aspects of Whitman that he has represented in *Leaves of Grass*. This book has focused mainly on Whitman's democratic visions. Whitman has been presented as the representative American poet who combined American patriotism with American democratic values and ideas. "For Whitman, loyalty to America was loyalty democracy ..." writes Mack in his "Introduction" to the book (xvi). "Song of Myself" is frequently referred in the seven chapters of the book.

Hindu civilization is the earliest civilization in the human history. Vedas and Upanisads and other Hindu manuscripts have recorded systematic investigations in the field be of nature, human knowledge and human and nature relationships. In this regard it would be curious to know our sage forefathers' treatment to nature. For this there is the book *Human Ecology in the Vedas* written by Marta Vannucci.

Directing their views towards the whole universe holistically, the Vedic sages were awakened to the cosmic law and order; they saw how nature, environment, or the universe itself was ever static; and how the orderly energy was at the root of all changes and movements. Instinctively, they not only bowed down to the 'Order' that reigns supreme, but also tried to attune themselves, their behavior, and their everyday activity to the eternal laws of the universe. To this, as the author says, they recognized as their *dharma*.

*Human Ecology in the Vedas* sets out fresh, insightful analyses of the Vedic writings to highlight the ancient Rsis' perceptions of the universe, nature, and cause-effect relationships; and how, millennia ago, these sages came to revere, even adore, nature in its different manifestations and, wittingly or unwittingly, evolve an environmentally friendly culture. In support of her findings, Vannucci also analyses a

few selected hymns from the Rgveda. Additionally, she also explores some important aspects of two Vedic gods: Indra and Varuna, who respectively represent the ‘material’ and ‘immaterial’ reality.

The book states that the formulation of dharma is based on fundamental ethical laws of nature to which all living beings as well as human being are subject. Further, because of his intrinsic nature and his position in the community, nobody can escape his dharma, though ecological constraints influence his behavior and karma. Any deviation from one’s dharma is an aberration that carries with it dire consequences for the offender.

The book also analysis three hymns and discusses some aspect of two important personalities that offer much support to the concepts expressed above. The hymn to ‘Mandtuka (the Frogs) describes the seasonal cycles, the role of Vhsnu as preserver and the corresponding rituals to ensure human participation in the cosmic drama in tune with Rta, the law and order of the universe. The hymn for the wedding of Surya, the sun’s daughter, focuses on the biological and social role of marriage and woman, valid even for present-day changing lifestyles. The third hymn is dedicated to Aranyani, the lady of the forest; it visualizes the forest as an ecosystem with a strong personality of its own, but not immutable.

Natavar Joshi’s *Some Aspects of Sanskrit Literature and Literary Criticism* is a collection of articles about Sanskrit literature and criticism. The book is worth reading as it has collection of articles related to nature and art. They provide good knowledge about Vedic concepts on nature and art. The article “Sisira in Sanskrit Poetry” presents the importance given to ‘Sisira’ season, which falls roughly in the months of February and March, by Sanskrit poets. This season is highly praised by Sanskrit poets. Another article, “The attitude of the Creative Writer in Sanskrit



towards Eco-system” also presents high consciousness of Sanskrit writers towards nature. The article “The poet, Poetic Activity and Sahrdaya” presents Sanskrit concept regarding poetic composition.

There are other books like *New Morning: Emerson in the Twenty-first Century* edited by Arthur S. Lothstein and Michael Brodrick, *Emerson's Nonlinear Nature* by Christopher Windolph, *Consciousness and Culture: Emerson and Thoreau* by Joel Porte, *Emerson and Self-culture* by John T. Lysaker, *Henry David Thoreau* published by The Library of America, *Companion to Walt Whitman* edited by Donald D. Kummings, *The Portable Walt Whitman* edited by Michael Warner, *Walt Whitman: Complete Poetry and Collected Prose* published by The Library of America, *Bloom's Modern Critical Views* edited by Harold Bloom, *Nature Writing: the Tradition in English* edited by Robert Finch and John Elder, and many more. *Encyclopedia of Environmental Ethics and Philosophy* edited by J. Baird Callicott and Robert Frodeman is also one of the important sources for short and informative articles on different nature related philosophies, trends, approaches, writers, on different religious philosophies like Christianity, Hinduism and Buddhism, and much more.

### **Summary**

From the wide ranging scholarly studies of the texts related to ecocriticism, there appear mainly three theoretical positions in the field of ecocritical studies in relation to human and nature relationship. They are strong anthropocentrism, weak anthropocentrism and ecocentrism. Similarly, there are certain perspectives that provide a researcher lenses from which he or she can view human and nature relationship represented by certain texts. They are like ecocritical perspective, ecofeminist perspective and post colonial perspective. And there are certain environmental tropes used by nature writers. They are like wilderness, pastoral,

apocalyptic and georgic and some others. Similarly, from the scholarly studies of the texts related to the proposed texts of American transcendental literature, it becomes apparent that there is sufficient ground in them to be studied from the ecocritical perspective as both American transcendentalism and ecocriticism are nature centered and focus human and nature relationship.

Human being has long used nature without any restriction. To such a dominating relation of human being to nature ecocritics call as strong anthropocentrism. As an influence of Greco-Roman traditions and Judeo-Christian beliefs, strong anthropocentrism gives superior privilege to human being over nature. It views that cornucopian nature is infinite and hence the more humans use nature the more they develop. Uncontrolled exploitation of nature with this view has made harsh damage on it, which has in turn made dire consequences on human being. By showing such negative results to human being, environmentalists have proposed stewardship role to nature. Their slogan is 'sustainable development'. Ecocritics call such a role of human being to nature as weak anthropocentrism, as there is controlled or balanced use of nature. However, they see superior role of human being over nature even in the stewardship assumptions as they view that nature is perfect on its own. They are not ready to give human being any higher or lower privilege to nature. Strong anthropocentrism, weak anthropocentrism and ecocriticism are theoretical paradigms of ecocriticism.

Ecocriticism has certain perspectives to see the human interactions with the environment. One of the well known perspectives is ecocentrism. Unlike anthropocentrism, it does not give any kind of privilege to humans over nature. For the ecocentrists, any object of nature is not even a single inch higher or lower to human being. So they propose to make friendly relationships with nature. They bring

notions of deep ecology and aesthetic values of nature to support their argument of human and nature complementary relationships. Deep ecology gives intrinsic value to nature: nature is perfect on its own, no human as an outside valuer is needed.

Similarly, aesthetic value of nature gives equal importance to all objects of nature as all parts are equally needed to make the wholeness of nature. Another well known perspective is ecofeminism. Ecofeminists equate females with nature. They take whole western metaphysics as the creation of males. For them environmental crisis and suppression on women are the result of androcentric practices. Hence they propose to comply with ecocentric notions. Another well known approach is postcolonial perspective. In this perspective marginalization of voiceless is equated with marginalization of nature as well. So it studies the binaries which play role in the colonization. Postcolonial ecocriticism plays a role of advocacy how the marginalized or colonized ones might be transformed.

Nature writers frequently use certain tropes. One of the widely used tropes is pastoral. In this one or more characters make a retreat to the pristine nature for their refreshment. Another important trope is wilderness. In it the protagonist goes to the wilderness for the study of nature or human life. He or she has usually hostile experience with nature or has the sense of wonder about it or human life. The trope of apocalyptic is also frequent in the nature writing. In it, fatal consequences to humanity caused by environmental damage are presented. The trope of georgic is but a less frequent trope in the environmental discourse. In it, a farmer's love for his farm land is presented. It shows how human being and environment are interrelated and hence how human being needs to protect environment.

There are some other tropes that are related to knowing and engaging. Many nature writers treat nature as female. The main reason behind this is their reproductive

elements. Some writers use nature as mother as it supplies many necessary natural elements. For some nature writers, nature is spiritual entity. It is dominant especially with British romanticists and American transcendentalists. They also treat nature as moral guide or teacher. Nature is also frequently used as the source of artefact. In many works living creatures of nature are treated as human beings. It is done with the view to impart moral lessons to the readers. All the environmental tropes are pervasive and persuasive and help to shape human understanding of the environment and responses to it. They also help determine the ideologies inscribed in the tropes and know how the tropes work to construct ecological subjectivities.

The review has enabled me to locate conceptual and methodological framework that has been applied in the textual analysis undertaken in Chapters 3, 4, and 5. It has helped me to know the positions or conceptual frameworks that have been used to study human and nature relationship. This made the research easy to know the conceptual position regarding human and nature relationships held by the selected writers. It has also helped me to choose ecocritical perspective for my studies from the perspectives prevailed within the field of ecocriticism. Furthermore, it has also made me easy to know what kind of tropes the selected writers have used.

Any research keeps the researcher in a dilemma of choosing the most appropriate methodology for the task. In *Becoming Qualitative Researchers: An Introduction* Glesne states, "people tend to adhere to the methodology that is most consonant with their socialized worldview ... their personal view of seeing and understanding the world" (8). In my choice of ecocriticism as the broad framework for my study, I first align myself with ecocritics who believe in, and are committed to, the physical world, a world that exists beyond the pages of literary texts. As a human being, I am concerned for the state of that physical world in the global context. I

consider, like Buell in *The Future of Environmental Criticism*, that "there is no space on earth immune from anthropogenic toxification" (41). I contend that, unless this widespread toxification is addressed, the quality of life for future generations will be impacted significantly, for as J. Diamond in *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies* suggests that we may be the first generation of human beings to envisage a planet incapable of sustaining healthy human life. I share with other ecocritics "a common concern about the exploitation and overconsumption of nature by certain human cultures" (Hitt 125). My stance as an ecocritic, therefore, is not only influenced by a commitment to environmentalism but is also motivated towards generating a common understanding of leading life proportionate to nature.

I believe that my approach to ecocriticism "shares with a number of other critical approaches ... the conviction that literary criticism should assume an overtly ethical stance" (Hitt 125). Therefore, my position with its particular attitudes and values will undoubtedly influence the kind of literary criticism I undertake in this study. However, poststructuralism demands the need for a dialogical engagement between my already held subject position as an ecocritic and the subject positions offered by the texts (Bakhtin). In this way my analysis encourages an interactive and interpretative reading, which match transdisciplinary approach of the poststructuralist assumptions, of the focus texts.

Most of the reviewed secondary materials have been used as the references in the scholarly studies of the selected works. Three chapters that follow are the detailed studies of the selected works which have been made by using the theoretical and methodological guidelines detected from this review of literature. No ecocritical and combined studies of the selected writers of American transcendental literature have been located.

## CHAPTER III

### EMERSON'S *NATURE*: NATURE AS THE UNIVERSAL SOUL

Ralph Waldo Emerson's work, especially *Nature*, manifests that nature is akin to universal soul. This chapter studies the arguments Emerson supplies for this and its implications in relation to human and nature relationship. It states that for Emerson all the objects of nature represent the universal soul. He thus assigns human beings' job as to recognize the law of nature and make their actions proportionate to it. He proposes observation and recognition of the symbols cast by objects of nature and application of the order of nature in life as the process for this. He makes job of language also as to represent spiritual features of nature. Such nature related concepts of Emerson not only gave rise to a different literary and philosophical movement called American transcendentalism but have also played one way or other an important role in the emergence of ecocriticism.

As Emerson gained knowledge and experience, he could not take Christianity as the source of knowledge and hence gave up pasturing in the Churches and turned to nature for the alternative of his spirituality. He published his first tiny but important work *Nature* in 1836 which was inaugurated by a Unitarian discussion group that came to be called as Transcendental Club of which Emerson was an unofficial spokesman. Emerson contributed in running Transcendentalists' magazine *The Dial* from 1840 to 1844. However, he gained his reputation as a prose writer mainly with the publication of *Essays* in 1841 and *Essays: Second Series* in 1844. His other works are like *The Poet*, *Experience*, *Representative Men*, *Conduct of Life*. Many of his writings were published posthumously in the late twentieth century under the title *Journal and Miscellaneous Notebooks*. Though first published, *Nature* has been regarded as his important work: "*Nature* has been recognized as a major document in

American Romanticism and Transcendentalism” (Baym 496). In all of his works, one can feel over pouring of his philosophy of ‘universal soul in nature.’

There is some difference between ‘soul’ and ‘spirit.’ The former is more related to inner self whereas the latter is more cosmic phenomenon. According to Thomas Moore, “the soul is at home in the lower levels of everyday existence while the spirit pursues the cosmic heights” (67). The soul goes deeper and deeper, yet all the time ripening. The spirit wants badly to transcend and progress. It makes a goal in mind and tries to achieve it. In this sense modern culture is more spiritual than soulful. However, both of these seem to be interdependent. Without the deep soul the spirit has the risk of floating away in the sky. And without spiritual significance soul cannot reach deep. Emerson uses ‘soul’ and ‘spirit’ synonymously. Though not with so much difference, he occasionally divides spirituality or soul into two parts: guiding force of the individual living beings as the "soul" or “spirit,” and overall guiding force of the universe as "Over-Soul" or “universal spirit.” He takes "soul" as the part of "Over-Soul." In "Over-Soul" he puts, "We live in succession, in division, in parts, in particles. Meantime, within man is the soul of the whole; the wise silence; the universal beauty, to which every part and particle is equally related; the eternal ONE" (131). When one knows about it, "the act of seeing and the thing seen, the seer and the spectacle, the subject and object, are one" (“Over-Soul 131). Most people have the sense of living in division or separate as they do not know about the unifying single force –"Over Soul" –which is the same for everything.

Emerson finds the “Over Soul” lurked behind nature. Though not a scientific observer himself, he asks why American should not have a poetry and philosophy of nature: "Why need I go gadding into the scenes and philosophy of Greek and Italian history, before I have washed my own face, or justified myself to my own

benefactors?" ("Spiritual Laws" 81). He presents his nature based poetry or philosophy in *Nature*. Its very introduction presents Emerson's dissatisfaction to society's backward-looking approach to knowledge and proposes to make spiritual understanding of nature as an alternative. He pours the key-note of all his writing when he writes in *Nature* thus:

The forgoing generations beheld God and nature face to face; we, through their eyes. Why should not we also enjoy an original relation to the universe? Why should not we have a poetry and philosophy of insight and not of tradition, and a religion by revelation to us and not the history of theirs? Embosomed for a season in nature, whose floods of life stream around and through us, and invite us by the powers they supply, to action proportioned to nature, why should we grope among the dry bones of the past, or put the living generation into masquerade out its faded wardrobe? ...

... Every man's condition is a solution in hieroglyphic to those inquiries he would put. He acts it as life, before he apprehends it as truth. In like manner, nature is already, in its forms and tendencies, describing its own design. Let us interrogate the great apparition, that shines so peacefully around us. Let us inquire, to what end is nature?  
(496-97)

These are Emerson's watchwords from the beginning to the end of his career. The extract is his questions not only to American past looking traditions including Christianity as a religion but also to America's still defining itself in relation to its European past. He seeks instead a poetry and philosophy of insight and self-trust which he finds to be correlated to the spirituality or essence of nature. Emerson finds



nature not only sustaining human beings but also inviting them to make their actions proportioned to it. Hence he invites humans to study and apprehend nature. For him, one can receive true features of nature only when they can be or are applied to life.

Emerson's effort of guiding human beings to make their behavior towards one another and towards nature under the basis of nature is not farfetched either. No matter after around one and half centuries after him, ecocritics have taken similar steps. Their aim is to build nature friendly human conducts. Slovic opines, "In today's society one of the most basic roles of environmental writers and their scholarly commentators is simply to redirect our attention to the world beyond human construction –to make us pay more attention to ourselves and to nature" (226). Like the concept of Emerson, this indicates that human beings' well being cannot be speculated without involving nature.

Since the whole effort of Emerson is to persuade people to view life from the perspective of nature, it is appropriate to study him from the ecocritical perspective. Studied from this perspective, he appears to have taken non-anthropocentric stand of human and nature relationship. Emerson has built his ideas related to human and nature relationship around the concept of soul, which he finds to be equally present in both humans and nature. For him, all objects of nature including humans cast or symbolize some meaning to which he collectively calls as soul: "the universe is composed of Nature and the Soul. Strictly speaking, therefore, all that is separate from us, all which Philosophy distinguishes as the NOT ME, that is, both nature and art, all other men and my own body, must be ranked under this name, Nature" (*Nature* 497). From this, Emerson makes it clear that there is "soul" embedded in nature of which humans are a part. This implies non-anthropocentric stance that human beings are no more fundamentally different from other species.

As Emerson builds the whole of his transcendental philosophy around his concept that earthly phenomena are manifestations of soul, I have taken this as his central theme and hence interpreted him accordingly. Following sections present how Emerson takes nature as the universal soul. They also show his nature based process of reasoning and his vision regarding human conducts. And finally, they put how Emerson contributes in the emergence of American transcendentalism and how he is similar or different from ecocritics in relation to human and nature relationship.

### **Nature as an Alternative of Spiritual Knowledge**

Emerson himself as a pastor of the second Church of Boston could not be convinced from the past looking Judeo Christian scriptures. So he turns to nature for the alternative of spiritual knowledge. He does not take nature just as wilderness with its pleasing and supplementary role to human beings. He views it spiritually as well. He sees significations or symbols of universal soul in all the objects of nature and these are always suggestive for him. He assigns human job as to know the spiritual features of nature and apply them in life.

Pre-Christian era was the Pagan world. In this period, nature was venerated; humans and nature messed; they were taken as a whole. With the coming of Christianity, nature was separated from human beings and it was made a means of human exploitation. In Genesis 1:26 it is espoused: "And God said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth" (*Holy Bible* 2). As shown in the second chapter, ecocritics make this responsible for the creation of anthropocentric world view in the western metaphysics that gives human beings freedom for the exploitation of nature. Though Emerson himself as a practitioner of

Christianity, he cannot agree these baseless supposed to be preordained assumptions about the supremacy of the human being over nature.

Emerson turns towards nature as an alternative for the study of spirituality.

How Emerson takes religion can be understood from his comparison between religion and ethics:

Ethics and religion differ herein; that the one is the system of human duties commencing from man; the other, from God. Religion includes the personality of God; Ethics does not. They are one to our present design. They both put nature under foot. The first and last lesson of religion is, "The things that are seen, are temporal; the things that are unseen are eternal" it puts an affront upon nature. (*Nature* 517)

Emerson defines religion as the system of human duties given by God whereas ethics is also a system of human duties but given by humans. However, both of them do not concern nature. It shows that both of them are just ideals without solid bases. For Emerson, it is idealism based on nature, not God, that holds the whole circle. Unlike Christianity, which is passed down from an aged creeping past to the succeeding generations unchanged, idealism sees all things as related. Emerson's criticism to religion is that it accepts the world as it finds it, without question or inquiry and, therefore, does nothing for the living soul. For him, everything about religion goes against philosophical and spiritual inquiry. However, Emerson gives equal status to both poetry and philosophy. The reason for this is that the ultimate end of both of these is truth synthesized from spirituality of nature. The difference between them is that whereas the end of poetry is beauty, the end of philosophy is truth. But ultimately they are same for him as beauty is truth and vice versa.

Numerous writers have attempted to render nature as a speaking subject. Emerson is the one who gives a distinct philosophy for this. He believes that the unspeakable but intelligible and practicable meaning of the world is conveyed to humans through every object of nature. The meanings that Emerson finds in the objects of nature are spiritual in quality as these are abstracts related to the final cause of the universe. It does not matter to Emerson whether nature exists or it is only a manifestation of the mind, so long as the result is the same: "Be it what it may, it is ideal to me," he writes (*Nature* 513). Like Emerson, Verena Andermatt Conley views that there is wholeness in nature but the symbolic language misses this by separating subject from object: "Nature is born under the sign of birth, fertility, song, vibration, proximity, and an absence of symbolic language that separated subject from object" (152). Commonly, nature is taken to be stable and man as changing; but Emerson suggests the opposite: "the world is a spectacle, something in him is stable" (*Nature* 514). For him, one who understands this will become divine and immortal with the realization that even time and space are not fixed features in the spirituality of nature.

Emerson takes nature as the model for life because for him it is the beholder of universal spirit. In his view, one can know from nature the universal soul or essence situated within, which is the amalgam of wisdom, love, beauty or power for him. This universal spirit or "Supreme Being" is behind and throughout nature and functions through it, human being included:

We learn that the highest is present to the soul of man that the dread universal essence, which is not wisdom, or love, or beauty, or power, but all in one, and each entirely, is that for which all things exist, and that by which they are; that spirit creates; that behind nature, throughout nature, spirit is present; that spirit is one and not

compound; that spirit does not act upon us from without, that is, in space and time, but spiritually, or through ourselves. Therefore, that spirit, that is, the Supreme Being, does not build up nature around us, but puts it forth through us, as the life of the tree puts forth new branches and leaves through the pores of the old. As a plant upon the earth, so a man rests upon the bosom of God: he is nourished by unfailing fountains, and draws, at his need, inexhaustible power. Once inspire the infinite, by being admitted to behold the absolute natures of justice and truth, and we learn that man has access to the entire mind of the Creator, is himself the creator in the finite. (*Nature* 519-20)

When one explores the universal spirit from the contact of nature that holds justice and truth, one acquires the entire mind of the Creator, and becomes creator oneself in the finite. In other words, the universal soul or the essence or the Supreme Being, to which Emerson calls also as God, functions through nature. And hence humans as the part of nature can acquire this in the form of soul from the passive contact with it.

Henry Drummond combines spirituality and nature in this way: “Living in the spiritual world, nevertheless, is just as simple as living in the natural world ; and it is the same kind of simplicity. It is the same kind of simplicity for it is the same kind of world—there are not two kinds of worlds” (257). Similar is the view of Moore:

“Nature not only reveals that God is present in the world in which we live, but it also teaches us the different kinds of spirituality that make up a devout life. Nature then is not a commodity but a source of self-reflection and contemplation” (184). Frederick Turner attributes human mind as the result of evolution. He puts, "Our bodies and brains are a result of evolution, which is a natural process so paradigmatic that it could almost be said to be synonymous with nature itself (42). Similarly, for Helene

Cixous also nature is "harmonious and peaceful, the way it can be found anywhere but in 'life itself'"(qtd. in Conley 151). These show that like Emerson, they also tend to guide human beings towards nature to know their natural features.

Emerson views that the world proceeds from the same spirit as the body of a person. The difference is only that it is not subjected to the human will. Its order cannot be avoided. According to Emerson, if we degenerate ourselves and do not apply the spiritual features of nature, our original home, we remain away from God too: "We are as much strangers in nature, as we are aliens from God" (*Nature* 520). It is because the universal spirit represented by nature itself is God for Emerson. He views, "The foundations of man are not in matter, but in spirit. But the element of spirit is eternity" (*Nature* 522). He defines the elements of nature like this: it is not fixed but fluid; spirit alters, moulds or makes it. If one is immobile or brute, it is the absence of spirit –God or existence. So Emerson puts, "Know then, that the world exists for you. For you is the phenomenon perfect" (*Nature* 524). From this Emerson hints that man has either to acquire the heavenly or Godly state in life from the observation and application of the universal spirit embedded in nature or else get opposite of it.

As Emerson believes that all the objects of nature refer to some symbolical meanings, nature is ideal for him. According to him, when the eye of reason opens and is stimulated to more earnest vision, natural objects become transparent, and are no longer seen; causes and spirits are seen through them. He asserts, "All things are moral; and in their boundless changes have an unceasing reference to spiritual" (*Nature* 510). Gary Snyder also views that university teachers and scholars of literature need a "more tribal sense of their own work" for which they could benefit from an "anthropological or prehistoric perspective" (*Real Work* 63-64). For Emerson,

“the happiest moments of life are these delicious awakenings of the higher power, and the reverential withdrawing of nature before its God” (*Nature* 524). He believes that nature is made to conspire with spirit to emancipate human beings.

Emerson’s concept of human being’s link with nature can be well understood also from Osho’s understanding about Buddha’s enlightenment: “Buddha has attained only what was so readily available to the stones; he returns to the same place. But his coming back is an absolutely new happening. The place is the same, the rocks are the same; the very tree under which Buddha attained enlightenment is also where Buddha is. And this is bound to be, for God is hidden in every grain, every particle” (435). This shows that enlightenment is nothing more than being immersed with the objects of nature. And being immersed with nature is being one with God as he lurks behind every particle. This is what Emerson’s concept is as well.

It is not only that Judeo Christian beliefs are responsible for the creation and practice of anthropocentric values which do not attribute spirituality to nature, even “modern science and early modern philosophy oversaw the elimination of the spiritual from these nonhuman bits of the created universe, the decralization of nature” (Pratt 366). Even modern philosophy is reluctant in attributing spirituality to animals; attributing spirituality to the whole nature is beyond imagination. Vernon Pratt further puts, “The restriction of mentality to human beings is also argued to have supported the conclusion that animals have no feeling and are therefore free of any kind of suffering” (366). Because of this also nature is severely ill treated even now. If nature had been given the attribution of spirituality, it could have been equally treated as the human being. Here lies the importance of Emerson’s giving spiritual attribution to nature.

For Emerson, too much reliance upon "empirical science" can stand in the way and distract us with nature's "functions and processes," without "contemplation of the whole" (*Nature* 520). According to him, the task of a naturalist is continual self-recovery rather than merely cataloging nature. Journey to the self is the spiritual one. We have misunderstood the problems to be solved in nature: it is not so pertinent to a naturalist to know all the individuals of the animal kingdom. It is more important to find patterns and unity in diversity. From this we will find that humans are not separate from nature, but that humanity can be found "in every great and small thing, in every mountain stream, in every new law of color, fact of astronomy" (*Nature* 521).

To spiritualize nature is a biocentric element in the sense that 'spirit' or 'soul' is an inclusive term that indicates interconnectivity of the earthly objects. According to Thomas Moore, "We are part of nature, and yet nature far transcends us and so opens up toward an intimate kind of transcendence" (181). Emerson is indicating toward this transcendental link between human being and nature.

As Emerson could not see discernible base in the past looking Christian scriptures, he turns towards nature for his spiritual homage. The reason for this is that he sees the replica of universal soul behind objects of nature. This universal soul is the ultimate end or God for him. If Emerson's proposition of taking nature as a spiritual entity was well accepted, excessive exploitation to nature could be halted. And this could be counted as one of the major contributions of Emerson. Following section presents what happens when one is immersed with the universal soul.

### **"Transparent eye-ball": An Image of the Universal Soul**

Spiritual quality of nature can be understood also from Emerson's image of the "transparent eye-ball". It is an image of one's state to have dissolved into the universal soul situated in nature. In such a state, one becomes not only part of nature but nature



itself. And in such a condition, the whole spirituality of nature is reflected in him or her. He or she acquires the heavenly state of bliss.

"Transparent eye-ball" is the image of the universal soul in which everything appears transparent. It is the state of being immersed into nature. In the following extract Emerson uses the image of "transparent eye-ball" and makes it clear what he means by the phrase:

In the woods, we return to reason and faith. There I feel that nothing can befall me in life, -no disgrace, no calamity, (leaving me my eyes,) which nature cannot repair. Standing on the bare ground, -my head bathed by the blither air, and uplifted into infinite space, -all mean egotism vanishes. I become a transparent eye-ball; I am nothing; I see all; the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or particle of God. (*Nature* 498-99)

In the "transparent eye-ball" everything appears transparent –one becomes everything. It is like the states of Hindu *Samadhi* and Buddhist *Nirvana*, about which terms I have not described here because of time, space, necessity, etc. reasons. I can only say that both are trans-meditative states in which one is perfectly dissolved in nature and is but anew –one with full knowledge of his or her permanent union with the universe and fully paying felt necessary natural duties as ever. When Emerson is in the woods, he feels of being nature itself. He is aware of himself being simultaneously a small part of nature and an embodiment of the entire universe. There has not remained any influence in him: all of his egos have vanished. His soul has reached the infinity. He feels "the currents of the Universal" flowing through him. This is Emerson's state of being dissolved in nature where inward and outward senses are aligned. "Transparent

eye-ball” is the image that represents this state. Dissolving like this in nature is a biocentric practice.

To the “Universal Being” Emerson takes as God and hence a person purified from the contact of nature becomes “part or particle of God” –the universal spirit. In the case of such a person, all sorts of hierarchies dissolve. All brothers, nearest friends, acquaintances, master or servant, all become trifle and a disturbance. All dissolve and become the part of eternal beauty. Like Emerson, Osho, one of the modern spiritualists, also takes immersing with nature as immersing with God: “God means totality. You have to love this vast expanse, the whole universe, all that is, as if it were a person. All your sins will be washed away when you fall hopelessly in love with all that is. Then whom will you deceive? Wherever you look he is there; in whatever eye you look you will find him seated” (216). This is exactly the state Emerson envisions. In “Society and Solitude” he puts, “We are not strong by our power to penetrate, but by our relatedness. The world is enlarged for us, not by new objects, but by finding more affinities and potencies in those we have” (744). It matches also with the view of William Blake: “If the doors of perception were cleansed everything would appear to man as it is –infinite” (qtd. in Gifford, “Pastoral, Anti-Pastoral, Post-Pastoral” 221). Emerson’s “transparent eye-ball” is the representation of this state. In deep ecology “We increasingly see ourselves in others, and others in ourselves. The self is extended and deepened as natural process of the realization of its potentialities in others” (Naess 59). This shows that Emerson’s view of dissolving in nature matches with ecocritical notions.

The realization of oneness with the universe in the state of “transparent eye-ball” becomes the person’s matter of the greatest delight. Emerson puts thus: “The greatest delight which the fields and woods minister, is the suggestion of an occult

relation between man and the vegetable. I am not alone and unacknowledged. They nod to me and I to them” (*Nature* 499). When one is in contact with nature, which “always wears the colors of the spirit” (*ibid*), one is in truth, the source of happiness. The seventh chant of “Isa Upanisad” states just like this:

7. For the one who knows  
       In whom all beings have become self,  
       How can there be delusion or grief  
       When he sees oneness? (Valerie 5)

This shows that Emerson’s linking the self with universal spirit is similar to the *Vedantic* concept of reality. According to *Vedanta*, there are degrees of reality. The world may be an illusion, but it is rooted in reality. The world appears real only to a person who is ignorant. Once he or she realizes *Brahman*, the world disappears and the person sees only the transcendent. In other words, the world is relatively real and *Brahman* is absolute reality. *Brahman* and Emerson’s “universal soul” are same in meaning. This indicates direct or indirect influence of *Vedanta* philosophy on Emerson. Both plead for immersing with the existence represented by the objects of nature.

Emerson takes such an understanding of nature as a poetic sense. For him, it is a poet who can integrate all the parts. In poetic understanding, the upholder of nature sees not only the physical elements but also impressions made by them. Emerson regrets that very few adults view nature in this way. Most adults have very much superficial seeing of nature. They see only its physicality. This is how Emerson explains a lover of nature:

To speak truly, few adult persons can see nature. Most persons do not see the sun. At least they have very superficial seeing. The sun

illuminates only the eye of the man, but shines into the eye and the heart of the child. The lover of nature is he whose inward and outward senses are still truly adjusted to each other; who has retained the spirit of infancy even into the era of manhood. His intercourse with heaven and earth, becomes part of his daily food. In the presence of nature, a wild delight runs through the man, in spite real sorrows. (*Nature* 498)

For Emerson, a true lover of nature is the one whose outward and inward senses are adjusted with the features of nature which holds spiritual import. And such a person carries spirit of infancy even in the age of adulthood. From such an adjustment with nature, a lover of nature gets heaven in this very earth. And hence he or she has no chance of the feeling of any sorrows. Emerson finds nature to be inviting humans for such an understanding of it: "Nature says, -he is my creature, and maugre all his impertinent griefs, he shall be glad with me" (*Nature* 498). When an adult wisely understands nature, he or she is purified and becomes transparent like nature itself.

In Emerson's view, one cannot understand secret of nature by seeing its outward appearance. One has to understand symbolical meanings cast by objects of nature by dissolving in it. As nature represents the soul, Emerson sees a miracle in it. When one looks at a star one might be wondered to its mystery. From this one knows that behind every object of nature there is some wonder. For Emerson, this wonder is the reality of the soul. So he says, "... the atmosphere was made transparent with design, to give man, in the heavenly bodies, the perpetual presence of the sublime" (*Nature* 497-98). Following extract also shows how Emerson takes nature as the appearance of soul:

The stars awaken a certain reverence, because though always present, they are always inaccessible; but all natural objects make a kindred

impression, when the mind is open to their influence. Nature never wears a mean appearance. Neither does the wisest man extort all her secret, and lose his curiosity by finding out all her perfection. Nature never became a toy to a wise spirit. The flowers, the animals, the mountains, reflected all the wisdom of his best hour, as much as they had delighted the simplicity of his childhood. (*Nature* 498)

For Emerson, nature is not as how it appears; the objects of nature represent some kindred impression. Even the wisest man cannot dig out all the secrets or perfections of nature. The objects of nature reflect wisdom seated in the form of soul. When the beholder understands the wisdom represented by natural objects with his or her open and receptive mind, he or she may be as happy as he or she was from the simplicity of his or her childhood. As children we appreciated the "simplicity" of nature; as adults we see its "wisdom."

By means of the image of the "transparent eye-ball," Emerson presents what happens when one attains the state of universal soul: one becomes as transparent as nature, which is devoid of any ego or thought. Like Emerson, in interpreting the hymns of Guru Nanak Dev, Osho says, "... bliss occurs only in the state of no-thought" (125). The state of the complete union with nature is the state of bliss or extreme happiness.

### **Language: Representation of the Universal Soul**

Emerson's concept of language can also be taken as to understand his concept of the spiritual quality of nature. In his view, if an object of nature does not cast any symbolical meaning, it is not an object of nature at all. Words represent objects or facts of nature, which in turn import spiritual reality. As nature is the source of truth, well coined language can lead one to truth too. So attaining truth depends upon how

much the producer or receiver of language has kept him or herself natural or unpolluted by the secondary desires. For Emerson, poets and philosophers are the true user of language as their aim is to reveal truth.

Ecocritics see cultural dominance over language. Language is taken to be a product of human mind to fulfill needs of cultural interaction. Human creativity has more to do with the mechanism and play of the language. "The elaboration of culture in the Occident is directly proportioned to a repression of nature" (Conley 148). As such, language has nothing to do with the representation of nature. Emerson's approach of language does not comply such an arbitrary orientation of language. He makes a direct link between language and nature. He believes that "Words are signs of natural facts," and "Every natural fact is a symbol of some spiritual fact" (*Nature* 504-5). Every word represents some material appearance which in turn imports spiritual facts. Words have such a power not because they are emblematic on their own but because they represent natural things which are emblematic. Emerson "presents the idea that nature is a symbolic language" (Wayne 189). Emerson posits thus:

Every appearance in nature corresponds to some state of the mind, and that state of the mind can only be described by presenting that natural appearance as its picture. An enraged man is a lion, a cunning man is a fox, a firm man is a rock, a learned man is a torch. A lamb is innocence; a snake is subtle spite; flowers express to us the delicate affections. Light and darkness are our familiar expression for knowledge and ignorance; and heat for love. Visible distance behind and before us, is respectively our image of memory and hope. (*Nature* 505)

Every natural phenomenon produces some state of the mind, which can be described by presenting natural appearance as its picture. For instance, to describe an enraged man, we say that he is like a lion; to describe a cunning man we say that he is like a fox. The words 'lion' and 'fox' import spiritual facts like 'enragement' and 'cunningness' because these are symbolized or reflected in the characters of these animals. Similar is the process of ecocriticism.

Like Emerson, ecocritics take objects of nature as the indicators of values. Ecocritics believe that nature helps us to recognize life. Howarth asserts, "Ecocriticism observes in nature and culture the ubiquity of signs, indicators of value that shape form and meaning. Ecology leads us to recognize that life speaks, communing through encoded streams of information that have direction and purpose, if we learn to translate the messages with fidelity" (78). Understanding life becomes possible when one is able to understand the information and purpose indicated by the objects of nature. In "Against Single Vision" Theodore Roszak posits thus:

But such symbols are with all of us everywhere and at all times; not only in the language and imagery of our cultural making, but in every most ordinary moment, every least scrap of the world around us, in the rhythms of our own body, in the lights and airs that fill the sky, in the things and creatures with which we share the earth. It is the presence of transcendent symbols instructing, nurturing, brightening life at every turn that makes the world at large a magical object and human culture a whole from its most technologically primitive origins to the present time. Here we find what can alone give meaning to our historical project: the eternity that seeks its reflection in the mirrors of time.

(114)

Like Emerson, Roszak sees symbols not only in the human made language but in all the objects of nature including air, sky or in the rhythms of our body. In such "transcendent symbols," he sees the ability of nurturing human culture reflecting eternity in the mirrors of time.

If Emerson visions "Over Soul" in the language represented by the objects of nature, Guru Nanak, one of the greatest Indian spiritualists, finds the whole existence even singing a song through the natural objects. Interpreting him Osho puts: "The whole existence is filled with song. You are deaf. That's what the matter is. You cannot see, you cannot hear. On every leaf, on every flower this message is written. He has filled the universe with so many colors and it is his music that vibrates in the rainbow of infinite hues. All creation is always celebrating this festival" (318). Emerson and Nanak are different only in words: Nanak's eternal song of nature is Emerson's "Over Soul."

If language represents eternity or universal spirit, curiosity arises: what human being could receive from it. For Emerson, man can receive all good qualities like truth and love. He asserts:

Man is conscious of a universal soul within or behind his individual life, wherein, as in a firmament, the nature of Justice, Truth, Love, Freedom, arise and shine. This universal soul, he calls Reason: it is not mine or thine or his, but we are its; we are its property and men .... That which, intellectually considered, we call Reason, considered in relation to nature, we call Spirit. Spirit is the Creator. Spirit hath life in itself. And man in all ages and countries, embodies it in his language, as the FATHER. (*Nature* 505)



In Emerson's view, the sense of "Justice, Truth, Love, Freedom" arise and shine in a human because he or she is also one of the parts of nature that holds "universal soul" to which he calls as "Creator" and "Reason," which does not see "mine or thine or his, but we." From this what Emerson makes clear is that the universal soul, the creator, or the "FATHER," teaches human beings lesson of wholeness through the symbolical language of nature represented in words.

Another question arises: who can receive such a spiritual message of wholeness? Emerson's answer is that those who have maintained simplicity in character and want to communicate truth can receive or explore them. He posits thus:

Corruption of man is followed by the corruption of language. When simplicity of character and sovereignty of ideas is broken up by the prevalence of secondary desires, the desire of riches, the desire of pleasure, the desire of power, the desire of praise, -and duplicity and falsehood take place of simplicity and truth, the power over nature as an interpreter of the will, is in a degree lost; new imagery ceases to be created, and old words are perverted to stand for things which are not; a paper currency is employed when there is no bullion in the vaults. In due time, the fraud is manifest, and words lose all power to simulate the understanding or the affections. (*Nature* 506)

Whenever, one's simple desire for truth is broken up by secondary desires like desire for riches, one's character and language are corrupted too. Such a person cannot understand and produce symbolic language of nature captured in words. George Kateb presents his understanding about Emerson: "Not only does he find the prevailing aims of action and some of the arrangements of life questionable and probably unsatisfactory to those who uphold them, he also, I think, is

temperamentally given to shuddering at the thought of clustered humanity, lost together because each is lost to himself or herself” (186). With such people, perverted images are inserted. They go on using the false language.

For Emerson, only wise men, especially gifted poets and philosophers, can correct the perverted language by using picaresque and allegorical language. Instead of an illusory identification with nature's effects, a wise person learns to feel the soul that streams through us and through the multiplicity and changes of nature. His or her language helps the user of language to create his or her harmony with nature.

Emerson states thus: “A life in harmony with nature, the love of truth and of virtue, will purge the eyes to understand her text. By degrees we may come to know the primitive sense of the permanent objects of nature, so that the world shall be to us an open book, and every form significant of its hidden life and final cause” (*Nature* 508). When one is in harmony with nature, one is filled with love of truth and virtue. He or she wants and can understand spiritual text of nature which represents the "final cause" –the "universal soul" or the "Creator". Thus, though one lives in the particulars of daily life and of external nature, one brings with him or her in every experiment the innate universal laws. Conversely, while these laws exist in the mind as ideas, they find their manifestation in nature around us forever embodied. Returning to the idea of nature as the source of our physical and mental health, Emerson declares that nature is a present sanity to expose and cure the insanity of men.

Emerson views that many writers only imitate thoughts and dictions of other writers. But wise writers do not do so. Instead, they coin words with visible things. For him, one who uses natural picturesque language “is a man in alliance with truth and God” (*Nature* 506). He gives the justification that “This imagery is spontaneous. It is the blending of experience with the present action of the mind. It is proper

creation. It is the working of the Original Cause through the instruments he has already made" (*Nature* 506). Snyder expresses similar view:

But creativity is not a unique, singular, godlike act of 'making something'. It is born of being deeply immersed in what is –and then seeing the overlooked connections, tensions, resonances, shadows, reversals, retellings. What comes forth is 'new'. This way of thinking about language is a world away from the usual ideas of education, however. (128)

Newness comes out of being one with nature. It is the message of the "Original Cause" made along with the emergence of nature itself. "Man acts as though he were the shaper and master of language, while in fact language remains the master of man", writes Martin Heidegger (89). Language possesses such a power because, as Emerson states, the "universal soul" or the "Original Cause" reflected in nature is its source.

Emerson claims that people who live in contact with nature in the country possess with more powerful mind than people who have artificial and curtailed life of cities and as a result they can use uncorrupted language. The reason behind this is that one can know more from nature than from the imitated or artificial communication in the cities. In nature, its light flows into the mind evermore. Emerson affirms, "The poet, the orator, bred in the woods, whose sense have been nourished by their fair and appeasing changes, year after year, without design and without heed, -shall not lose their lesson altogether, in the roar of cities or the broil of politics" (*Nature* 507). Like Emerson, William Wordsworth chooses "low and rustic" life as the subject of *Lyrical Ballads* because "in that situation the passions of men are incorporated with the beautiful and permanent forms of nature" (17). A poet is nourished in nature because all natural objects import some metaphorical signification. A right relationship with

nature means an understanding of the relation of the parts to the whole. For Emerson, it is the poet who can integrate all the parts. So he assigns a poet's vocation as to interpret human beings to themselves. The poet translates the observable facts of nature into knowledge about human beings and the world. He or she is a poet because they would not endure the world if it were left uninterpreted: it would be 'cheap' and 'coarse'.

Even if nature represents universal spirit, it is not discernible to ordinary people as it is not expressible without using some means. Emerson makes language as the significant means for this as it can represent the spiritual import of nature. Thus for him picaresque language is the apt language as it represents spiritual symbols of nature. And poets or sages are producers and saviors of such a language. Question arises, what kind of human behavior Emerson visions from such a language.

Following section answers this.

### **Human Conduct: Proportionate to Nature**

As Emerson believes that nature is the reflection of universal spirit, he thinks that humans have to know the laws of nature from the personal observation and mould their behaviors accordingly. He is well convinced that when human beings lead life in this way, they will be as simple as nature and be holistic in attitude and behavior. Then there will be peace, progress and happiness not only in their lives but also in the community and environment.

For Emerson, objects of nature not only represent universal soul, they also mould human behavior. It is in the sense that humans can learn about the spiritual realities from the symbols of nature. Thus for Emerson, nature is the final teacher of human beings and hence their behavior will and should be related to nature:

Space, time, society, labor, climate, food, locomotion, the animals, the mechanical forces, give us sincerest lessons, day by day, whose meaning is unlimited. They educate both the Understanding and the Reason. Every property of matter is a school for the understanding, -its solidity or resistance, its inertia, its extension, its figure, its divisibility. The understanding adds, divides, combines, measures, and finds everlasting nutriment and room for its activity in this worthy scene. Meantime, Reason transfers all these lessons in its own world of thought, by perceiving the analogy that marries Matter and Mind.

(*Nature* 509)

One can take lessons from every object of nature, no matter time, society, animals or mechanical forces and from their conditions like solidity, resistance or inertia. Emerson stresses, "Sensible objects conform to the premonitions of Reason and reflect conscience. All things are moral; and in their boundless changes have an unceasing reference to spiritual nature" (*Nature* 510). He further claims that "every natural process is but a version of a moral sentence. The moral law lies at the centre of nature and radiates to the circumference" (*Nature* 511). The objects of nature first give one understanding about them, which then help develop one's reason, thoughts, activities and behavior in worthy sense. Human behavior perceived and emerged from the marriage of "Matter and Mind" in this way will be proportionate to nature.

Nature has not been taken as the source of knowledge and conducts even in the present world. McDowell claims, "Much writing today continues to view nature solely as a backdrop to the really important things, which are human matters divorced from a nature that remains "out there" (379). Question might arise, what might

happen if one makes conducts un-proportionate to nature? For Emerson, disorder, difference, fragmentation and individuality will be created:

The whole character and fortune of the individual is affected by the least inequalities in the culture of the understanding; for example, in the perception of differences. Therefore is Space, and therefore Time, that man may know that things are not huddled and lumped, but sundered and individual. A bell and plough have each their use, and neither can do the office of the other. Water is good to drink, coal to burn, wool to wear; but wool cannot be drunk, nor water spun, nor coal eaten. The wise man shows his wisdom in separation, in gradation, and his scale of creatures and of merits, is as wide as nature. (*Nature* 509-10)

In nature, things are different and they have different functions. But the wholeness of nature is never broken. Likewise, a wise person, habitual to live in proportionate to nature, might divide things but without breaking the wholeness of nature. He or she learns this from the spirituality of nature: "His insight refines him. The beauty of nature shines in his own breast," Emerson envisions (*Nature* 510). He further puts, "It [nature] offers all its kingdoms to man as the raw material which he may mould into what is useful. Man is never weary of working it up" (*Nature* 510). For Emerson, "the exclusively materialistic life is not life, but a misdiagnosed dying" (Kateb 188). When things are understood only with reference to culture, there is high chance of fragmentation and individuality in understanding: "She [nature] pardons no mistake. Her yea is yea, and her nay, nay" (Emerson, *Nature* 510). From this Emerson shows that if we do bad that does not fit in the order of nature, its results will also be bad.

Another question arises: to what kind of conducts do the symbols of nature indicate? Emerson's answer is that spirit of nature promotes one for holistic kind of conducts that do not break any biotic wholeness. He puts:

The river, as it flows, resembles the air that flows over it; the air resembles the light which traverses it with more subtle currents; the light resembles the heat which rides with it through Space. Each creature is only a modification of the other; the likeness in them is more than the difference, and their radical law is one and the same. Hence it is, that a rule of one art, or law of one organization, holds, true throughout nature. So intimate is the Unity, that, it is easily seen, it lies under the undermost garment of nature, and betrays its source in universal Spirit. For, it pervades Thought also. Every universal truth which we express in words implies or supposes every other truth.

*(Nature 512)*

The observer of nature learns from nature holistic kind of conducts because he or she finds every object of nature interconnected. They are not only interconnected but also share parts or elements of others. All objects of nature share the same law of nature one way or the other. The law keeps the unity of nature. The aptly coined words imply truths of nature. When one understands complementary quality of the objects of nature and even that of language, one cannot be diverted from making holistic kind of conducts.

What features come under holistic kind of conducts might be another matter of research. In general, they might be worldly, truthful, peaceful, loving, kind, and so on. In the following lines, Emerson gives some glimpse of the actions of such a person:

The same central Unity is still more conspicuous in actions. Words are finite organs of the infinite mind. They cannot cover the dimensions of

what is in truth. They break, chop, and impoverish it. An action is the perfection and publication of thought. A right action seems to fill the eye, and to be related to all nature. The wise man, in doing one thing, does all; or, in the one thing he does rightly, he sees the likeness of all which is done rightly. (*Nature* 512)

A person who has refined his or her behavior like "David, Isaiah, Jesus" by penetrating the "bone and marrow of nature," which are spiritual in feature, he or she never performs fragmentary or individualistic behavior that harms others. He or she does not necessarily preach about it using his or her words, which cannot hold whole truth, but shows in his or her conducts. His or her noble thoughts are reflected in his or her actions. Nobody dislikes his or her actions as they are "related to all nature." Such actions are always right.

One can refine one's behavior or actions by learning virtues from nature as the beauty with its natural forms reflect truth or spiritual elements. Emerson examines "our nobler want" beyond our physical needs, that is, how nature inspires "the love of Beauty" (*Nature* 500). Human actions are inspired by, and made nobler from the surrounding natural beauty. For example, the majestic scenery welcomed the early explorers. Intellect always searches absolute order. For Emerson, what is common in different forms of nature is "perfectness and harmony" –the forms of beauty (*Nature* 504). He thinks that the world thus exists to the soul to satisfy the desire of beauty and beauty of nature is the herald of the inward and eternal beauty.

For Emerson, nature becomes also an object of intellect inspiring thought and art. He states, "The beauty of nature reforms itself in the mind, and not for barren contemplation, but for new creation" (*Nature* 503). He means to say that mind recreates the beauty of nature. To such a creation of natural beauty, he takes as art. In



his view, humans, as inspired by nature, create art, and art in turn "throws a light upon the mystery of humanity" (*Nature* 504). He takes art as an "epitome of the world." Still, this is not "the last or highest expression" of nature. Nature is filled with things that are beautiful "in and for themselves" (*Nature* 500). This shows that Emerson gives intrinsic value to nature.

The spiritual quality reflected by intrinsic values of nature becomes source of moral guidance or discipline for Emerson. He argues that morality comes from within and from the spiritual significance of nature, not from the Biblical reasons to live ethically. Nature becomes a source of knowledge as well as a model for morality. According to Emerson, one develops insight by comprehending the laws of nature as one is "impressed and even daunted by the immense Universe to be explored" (*Nature* 510). This disciplines man's mind into nature's reason with the "realization that objects in nature reflect the conscience" (*Nature* 510). Through nature comes "the laws of right and wrong," which "echo the Ten Commandments" (*Nature* 510). Emerson shows how the Bible itself uses nature to explain morality, the farm as gospel with its stories of "the chaff and the wheat, weeds and plants, blight, rain, insects, sun" (*Nature* 511). For him, nature's lessons are both universal and particular, and they have most public and universal function.

For Emerson, a follower of nature makes a decision by checking whether it fits the laws of nature or not. If it fits, decision is made and vice versa. In other words, before reasoning one checks whether it can be applied to one's own life, which is analogous to nature. If it is applicable to his or her life i. e. fits the order of nature, reasoning is made. Emerson assumes that human actions made from such a way of reasoning are proportionate to nature. He does so because he takes nature as the perfection of creation. For him, natural values are known not from outwardly made

cultural codes but from insight and revelation that are seated within felt and applied to lives. This can be understood from this example of Emerson presented elsewhere:

"These roses under my window make no reference to former roses or to better ones; they are for what they are; they exist with God today. There is no time to them. There is simply the rose; it is perfect in every moment of its existence." Emerson regrets with people's habit of living either in the past or in the future. He thinks that unless one learns to live in the present as in the order of nature one cannot remain happy.

Emerson's such a theory of reasoning and human conducts is opposite from the then existed ones. In his time there were mainly two modes of reasoning. They were religious mode and the empirical mode of John Locke. In religious mode, human actions and values were judged whether they matched the established religious values and creeds or not. Baym writes, "Boston Unitarianism, led in the 1820s by William Ellery Channing, still accepted the Bible as the revelation of God's intentions for humankind ..." (493). Similarly, in Lockean mode, reasons and human actions were made under the basis of sensual perceptions with the assumption that human mind is blank. In other words, outward turning cultural values that were guided by religious, Lockean or empirical and materialistic philosophies were the sources of reasoning and human behavior in the time of Emerson. However, for Emerson, only nature is the touchstone of any reasoning. American transcendentalism had much in common with Christianity, but it was separated from it by its denial of the supernatural. So Emerson does not take Jesus Christ's words as the final. Jesus was one of the gifted spirits who had the communions with the "Over-Soul." In Emerson's view, such nobler prophets go on coming.

Reliability behind Emerson's pleading for making human actions proportionate to nature can be checked by observing the practices of Hindu sages.

Hindu *Rsis* always tried to make their actions proper to nature and pled for the same. Natural objects like fire, wind, water, and sun are taken as Gods in the *Vedas*. For instance, *Agni* or fire is worshiped like this: “May Agni the invoker, of wise intelligence, the true, the most brilliant fame, the god come with gods” (Macdonell et al 37). In *Vedas* fire is associated with human life and hence is taken as the lord of the house. Natural objects like fire can be understood as God only in transcendental sense. Only such is the concept American transcendentalists want to impart. Learned people might give some extra significance to the objects of nature. For instance, it is in the transcendental sense, a cylindrical shaped stone known as *shibalinga* kept upright on a flat rimmed chalice shaped stone, is the image of Hindu God Shiva. According to Trilok Chandra Majupuria, “Shiva-linga is identified as cosmic *Purusa*,” the creator in Hindu religion (28). There is no harm in it as such a concept of God copes with nature in the cosmic sense.

Taking human being as the part of nature, and symbols of nature as the means of human knowledge and language, Emerson pleads to make human actions proportionate to nature. He thinks that nature itself invites humans to follow the order of nature, which is always reasonable, by importing universal soul in the objects. And being the member of the biotic community, human being has to adopt the order of nature sooner or later. Emerson’s concept of “Over-Soul” shows how it becomes possible.

### **"Self-Reliance": Way to the "Over-Soul"**

Emerson's concept of self reliance is worth mentioning here because it is related to his concept of soul. It helps to understand how his spiritualism works. Self reliance is a process of reasoning from intuition, conscience or self realization, not

from what others say or write. The core of self-reliance is proper engagement with truth, requiring as much substantive withholding as possible.

In "Self Reliance" Emerson defines the term as "Trust thyself" or as "To believe your own thought, to believe that what is true for you in your private heart," which is "true for all men" (23). By 'self-trust' Emerson means trusting the entire universe: "Speak your latent convection, and it shall be the universal sense; for always the inmost becomes the outmost ..." ("Self Reliance" 23). Kateb defines Emerson's "self reliance" more clearly: "One relies on oneself rather than seeking support in external commitments. One stays within oneself in order to enter imaginatively into all the commitments that social life displays, and must display" (174). He further puts, "Every individual is a new individual and can, with self-trust, do in the world something not yet done but worth doing" (189). According to Emerson, such a universal originality is proportionate to everyone but it does not come to one who is reluctant in receiving the universal soul.

Emerson asserts that if a simple person, who takes knowledge from the symbols of natural objects, understands something to be true, will be true not only to every person, but also to everything of nature. Such a truth or originality can be understood only by means of spiritual realization. In "Over-Soul" Emerson defines "Over Soul" as "The Supreme Critic on all the errors of the past and the present, and the only prophet of that which must be, is that great nature in which we rest, as the earth lies in the soft arms of the atmosphere; that Unity, that Over-Soul, within which every man's particular being is contained and made one with all other ..." (131). In such a state of realization, one is dissolved into infinity or what Emerson calls as "Over-Soul," in which there is nothing but eternity.

To this inaudible "primary wisdom" Emerson calls as "Intuition" ("Self Reliance 33). He recognizes intuition as a form of supra-sensuous, supra-rational mode of knowing-by-being or knowledge through self-immediacy. In such an original or "deep force, the last fact, behind which analysis cannot go, all things find their common origin"—all things dissolve into one ("Self Reliance 33). In Emerson's view, one can reach in such a state only in the form of soul. In ordinary level we see things and share them in life. Then we see appearances in nature. In "Self Reliance" he posits:

We first share the life by which things exist, and afterwards see them appearances in nature, and forget that we have shared their cause. Here is the fountain of action and the fountain of thought. Here are the lungs of that inspiration of man which cannot be denied without impiety and atheism. We lie in the lap of immense intelligence, which makes us organs of its activity and receivers of its truth.... If we ask whence this comes, if we seek to pry into the soul that causes, all metaphysics, all philosophy is at fault. (33)

Emerson believes that one gets wisdom and intelligence when one sees appearance of universal soul in nature, in which everything becomes one. For him, "first truths were to be derived from the mind's observation of, and interaction with, nature" whose beauty and laws correspond to the beauty and laws of the very mind (Keane 184). Emerson takes this process as a guide or inspiration for human conducts. It is because, in his view, only from this process one can get original wisdom and intelligence which becomes light for one's life.

Emerson makes much of one's vocation as to find keys to being oneself. Self-reliance means yielding to one's real work, if one is released enough to insist on

discovering it. Emerson affirms: "As soon as the man is at one with God, he will not beg. He will then see prayer in all action. The prayer of the farmer kneeling in his field to seed it, the prayer of the rower kneeling with the stroke of his oar, are true prayers heard throughout nature, though for cheap ends" ("Self-Reliance" 40). Any activity of such a person becomes a kind of prayer, the only genuine prayer.

One who has got wisdom in this way does not make any difference between people, or between human beings and nature. Emerson compares conducts of such a person with a brook: "when a man lives with God, his voice shall be as sweet as the murmur of the brook and the rustle of the corn" ("Self Reliance" 35). Such a person does not become but him or herself –their intrinsic worth. He or she is neither right nor left. Anna Bramwell avows, "Those who want to reform society according to nature are neither right nor left" (qtd. in Lawrence Buell, *The Environmental* 1). Such a person does not disturb others. He or she satisfies his relations not only to "father, mother, cousin, neighbor, town" but also to "cat, and dog" –nature (Emerson, "Self Reliance" 38). He or she is a self-help kind of person and remains happy all the time. In *Bhagavad –Gita*, Lord Krishna tells Arjun: "The humble sages, by virtue of true knowledge, sees with equal vision a learned and gentle brahmana, a cow, an elephant, a dog and a dog-eater [outcaste]" (trans. Swami Prabhupada 261). This indicates the influence of the *Vedanta* philosophy on Emerson.

Emerson's concept of "Over-Soul" is not related to the religious creeds of his time. Robertson Nicoll describes Emerson's concept of "Over-Soul" that goes against the creeds of his time:

Bearing in mind Emerson's intense dislike of creeds in this age of the world, we may state his ruling intuitions. He affirmed the doctrine of the Over-Soul –that under the changing phenomena and below the

jarring strife of atoms and men there lies a single First Cause; an infinite, eternal and perfect Substance; a divine noumenon of which earthly phenomena are manifestations. Nature and the soul alike are informed by it, and they are governed by the same laws. These laws are Progress and Righteousness. The whole world is an omen of good. If humanity places itself in right relations with God and nature, it must be purified and elevated. The more complete the surrender, the more perfect will be the pace. So long as man remains out of harmony with the Over-Soul, all things are hostile and incomprehensible. (677)

Emerson declines to affirm the personality of the divine substance, but he has no doubt that the nature of things is kind and righteous. Every soul is independent and self-determined, but bound to submit its selfish instincts to the universal law and thus become divine. When the soul opens itself to the ideal, and admits the inflowing of the "Over-Soul", there is a tide of ecstasy –the human and the divine are merged.

Some blame Emerson of being totally an idealist as he pleads suggestive ways of reasoning or takes soul as the ultimate reality. According to Michael Cisco, Emerson in his time was "characterized by hostile onlookers as dreamy, vague thinker who never descended from the clouds to contend with the business of life" (60). Emerson is not an idealist in the true sense. His spirituality is to make one immerse with nature only by which one reaches the state of being –the state of reality. Moore puts, "Emerson is faulted for his supposed moralism and his emphasis on self-reliance. But to me he represents the best in the spiritual explorer" (74). In "Ralph Waldo Emerson –Realist," Call claims that "Mr. Emerson never viewed himself other than with the spirit of a realist" (99). He supplies further more evidences of Emerson of being a realist:

Mr. Emerson himself taught reality and realism. In the *Transcendentalist* he said, "Mind is the only reality," and in the *Natural History of Intellect*, "I believe in the existence of the material world as the expression of the spiritual or the real." He defined Transcendentalism, however, as "the Saturnalia of excess of faith." Mr. Emerson based his whole conception of human relations upon moral sentiment, which he found at the center of the physical universe as well as of the universe of thought. "The whole of nature is the metaphor of the mind. The laws of moral nature answer to those of matter as face to face in a glass," wrote in that first book of his. He emphasized the dignity of the individual life, "Trust thyself; God dwells within thee." Creeds and dogmas were offensive to him. His mind was ever seeking for new and higher faiths. (101)

Emerson always opposed creeds and dogmas. He emphasized to respect individual dignity seated in the form of soul. His conception of human relations was based on moral sentiment, which he found at the center of the physical universe. The claim of Call and the expressions of Emerson he has quoted well prove that Emerson is a realist.

Emerson's concept of soul becomes a realist phenomenon if it is interpreted from Hindu philosophy. According to Hindu philosophy, there is an unseen element known as energy symbolized as fire. This energy transforms all earthly objects into spiritual reliance. Raimundo Panikkar puts, "... the sacrificial fire ... transforms all material and human gifts into spiritual and divine realities so that they may reach their endless destination" (qtd. in Amma Raj Joshi 1). Hindu sages take soul as *purusa* or *chetan*, conscious force. When it comes to contact with the unconscious *prakirti* or



*Jad*, matters including human intellect or mind, worldly manifestations take place.

Amma Raj Joshi posits, “This union of *jad* and *chetan* –*prakirti* and *purusa* –indicates the necessity of the material world for the formation of knowledge and that Hindu faith is ecofriendly as it assumes the inevitability of place-based awareness” (3). This shows that the concept of soul or “Over Soul” is also an earthly phenomenon.

Emerson’s concept of “Over-Soul” is very much related to the Hindu *Vedanta* division of *atman* or soul and *paramatman* or supreme soul or *brahman*. The *Jivatman* or the individual soul can be liberated from the cycle of birth and death by becoming one with the *paramatman* or supreme soul or *brahman*. As these concepts are abstract in nature, the Hindu *Upanisads* use riddle and paradoxes to describe them. Roebuck J. Valerie puts, “In the Upanisads, the riddle was particularly apt as a way of suggesting ideas about *Brahman* and *atman* which could not readily be conveyed in conventional terms ...” (xxii-xxiii). The union between *atman* and *paramatman* or *Brahman* or supreme soul becomes possible by means of intuitive sight gained through the study of the scriptures, instruction of teacher, practice of ethical and spiritual disciplines, individual meditation, or direct intuitive experience. The expansive soul destroys all dualism and refuses to recognize even a plural world. This similarities between Emerson’s “Over Soul” and *paramatma* or *Brahman* indicates the influence of *Vedanta* philosophy on him.

In sum, Emerson names as “Over-Soul” to the overall soul situated in all objects of nature including human being. To receive or explore the soul situated both within and outside as the part of “Over-Soul,” one has to follow the order of nature. The more the submission, the greater is the intensity of acquiring the soul. And for Emerson, from the total union with nature one attains the “Over Soul,” the Godly state

of infinite peace and happiness. The similarities in the concepts of “Over Soul” and Hindu *paramatman* indicates some influence of Hindu philosophy in Emerson.

### **Soul from the Ecocritical Perspective**

Since ecocriticism is also a nature centered approach, it would be worth knowing its stance in the matter of soul –the guiding force of Emerson and American transcendentalism. Ecocriticism holds more earth centered approach. The main stream ecocriticism has not adopted the notion of soul as it cannot be verified. Even then, many of its practitioners take nature as the beholder of truth. Some hold the concept of Gaia or earth as a super organism. These can be taken as a step of ecocriticism towards American transcendental treatment of soul in nature.

Though both American transcendentalism and ecocriticism focus nature, there are some differences between them. One of the differences is in the matter of the treatment of soul. Unlike American transcendentalism, ecocriticism does not concern with the concept of soul. Ecocriticism aims to establish non-anthropocentric relationship with nature by showing human and nature physical connectivity. According to Garrard, "... ecocriticism is the study of the relationship of the human and the non-human ..." (5). Similarly Glotfelty defines ecocriticism: "Simply put, ecocriticism is the study of the relation between literature and the physical environment ... ecocriticism takes an earth-centered approach to literary studies" (xix). According to Amma Raj Joshi, "... ecopoetics extends the view that knowledge is derived from the perception of the world and is empirical in nature, form and content" (1). These show that ecocriticism is basically an earth-centered approach.

However, like Emerson and other transcendentalists, some ecocritics see elements of truth in nature. For instance, Raymond Williams thinks that human beings may learn about human nature from nature. This learning will be spiritual or implied

in quality as there is no direct learning in nature. Like Emerson, Williams views that humans may take "... nature as the principle of creation, of which the creative mind is part, and from which we may learn the truths of our own sympathetic nature" (50). Similarly, like Emerson, Theodore Roszak sees discourse of the spiritual world in the objects of nature. In the essay "Against Single Vision" he puts, "Wait, watch, be still, be open: even the humblest may allow'st discourse with the spiritual world" (111). William Cronon also expresses similar views as that of Emerson: "Wilderness is the natural, unfallen antithesis of an unnatural civilization that has lost its soul. It is a place of freedom in which we can recover our true selves we have lost to the corrupting influences of our artificial lives. Most of all, it is the ultimate landscape of authenticity" (80). Like Emerson, Cronon believes that authentic soul remains in nature from which human beings can discover their lost natural state. These show that practitioners of ecocriticism comply with Emerson's concept of soul in nature one way or other.

Furthermore, within ecocriticism there is also an undercurrent of taking the earth as the super organism with the name Gaia. James Lovelock in his *Gaia: a New Look at Life on Earth* presents his hypothesis that the earth could be described as a super organism analogous to a living organism. He gives the reason that just as living organisms produce the atmosphere they need to inhabit, so is the feature of earth too. For instance, even if the temperature of the sun is ever increasing, the earth has maintained its balance throughout her history. Carbon dioxide is the element which plays role in making the atmosphere hot. But the earth manages its natural production. For instance, "marine organism use carbon dioxide dissolved in seawater to make their shells, which are then laid down in vast numbers in sedimentary rocks such as limestone. Some carbon dioxide is removed when dead plants decompose

incompletely forming coal, oil, and other sediments" (Garrard 173-74). So Gaia hypothesis claims that such a process "tends towards a geophysiological balance of energy and chemical elements analogous to the physiological balance of an organism" (Garrard 173-74). Modern science finds the earth to be expanding. According to Stephan Hawking, "... the universe is expanding by between 5 percent and 10 percent every thousand million years (49). This may also be taken as the subsidiary point in taking earth as the higher organism.

It might not be Lovelock who first takes earth as the living organism. Thoreau projected this long ago. He does not take the earth as a lifeless object to be studied by geologists and antiquaries. Instead he takes it as a living object like the leaves of a tree which bears fruits and flowers:

The earth is not a mere fragment of dead history, stratum upon stratum like the leaves of a book, to be studied by geologists and antiquaries chiefly, but living poetry like the leaves of a tree, which precede flowers and fruit, -not a fossil earth, but a living earth; compared with whose great central life all animal and vegetable life is merely parasitic." (*Walden* 954)

For Thoreau, all animal and vegetable life is merely parasitic to the earth. When they die, they become a supply for the needs of other living organisms like grass or groves, for instance, on which other lives depend. Thoreau puts, "In the siliceous matter which the water deposits is perhaps the bony system, and in the still finer soil and organic matter the fleshy fiber or cellular tissue. What is man but a mass of thawing clay? The ball of the human finger is but a drop congealed" (*Walden* 953). Human life is not different from the law of nature: "So our human life but dies down to its roots, and still puts forth its green blade to eternity," asserts Thoreau (*Walden* 955).

Thoreau observes the liveliness of the Walden Pond by using metaphor of eye:

A lake is the landscape's most beautiful and expressive feature. It is earth's eye; looking into which the beholder measures the depth of his own nature. The fluviate trees next the shore are the slender eyelashes which fringe it, and the wooded hills and cliffs around are its overhanging brows. (*Walden* 941)

For Thoreau, it seems that this one hillside illustrates the principle of all the operations of nature. Bruno Latour opines, "Nothing is more anthropocentric than the inanimism of nature" (234). According to McLoughlin, for the American transcendentalists, "Nature is not mechanical but vital, the universe is not dead or inanimate but radiantly alive, and that God is not remote but ever-present" (22). This indicates the fact that though any name like Gaia was not given, American transcendentalists took earth or nature as the living organism.

No matter who first used the concept of the earth as the living organism or Gaia, it has been attractive to some ecologists though it has not been adopted by main stream ecocriticism: "Gaia has been attractive to deep ecologists and eco-spiritualists as well as climatologists hydrologists and philosophers of science" (Garrard 74). Some females take the metaphor as a figure of female oppression. "This earth is my sister," meditates Susan Griffin. She further puts: "I love her daily grace, her silent daring, and how loved I am how we admire this strength in each other, all that we have lost, all that we have suffered" (219). But Ernest Callenbach is not likely to accept Gaia as a supreme being: "Gaia is not a conscious entity with a purpose or special concern for humans. Those who think of it as a stand-in for a Supreme Being or God are misinformed" (62). Ascribing organic unity to the planet and giving it the name of earth Goddess, Gaia has been an important trope for global environmental

consciousness. Both deep ecologists and ecofeminists advocate a nature-based spirituality, with divinity located in this world, rather than in figures located off the planet (Dryzek 190).

Main stream ecocriticism's reluctance in accepting the organic unity of the universe and many ecologists' and ecofeminists' sense of spiritual attachment with nature can be taken as ecocriticism's one step toward realizing spirituality of nature one way or other. American transcendental spiritual concept itself is not farfetched either. Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman spent whole of their lives in their societies by remaining fully busy in teaching ways of human conducts based on the spirituality of nature. Their whole thrust is just to show the fact that there is interconnectivity among the objects of nature, which notion could be represented by any term, be it God, universal soul or spirit, wholeness, or whatsoever. Osho shows how important it is to know the order of nature. According to him, "Religion –dharma –means nature, the natural order of things.... To be removed from one's nature is to be lost. To return to one's own nature is to return homewards. To be established in one's own nature is to be established in God" (156). Osho clarifies that this is the state of being one with the existence from which harmony is created: "You will possess nothing yet have everything. You will find yourself absolutely alone and yet all the world is with you. There will be a rhythm, a harmony between you and existence; you will have established an intimate contact with existence" (217). For Osho nature, religion or dharma, and God are one and one can be harmonized with nature only by means of spiritual realization. To lead individuals towards such a realization is the whole aim of American transcendentalism.

This is the essence of the whole Oriental *Vedic* philosophy as well.

Highlighting how millennia ago the ancient *Rsīs* came to revere and adore nature in its

different manifestations and, how they evolved an environment friendly culture, Vannucci presents her impressions of the *Vedic* writings like this: "Vedic man had his views directed holistically towards the whole universe ..." (3). She further puts that *Vedic* "formulation of *dharma* is based on fundamental ethical laws of nature to which all livings as well as man are subject (ix). Similarly, in "The Attitude of Creative Writers in Sanskrit Towards Eco-system," Natavar Joshi reports, "Deriving benefits from the nature's bounty is welcome, but there is no word like exploitation of nature or conquering of nature" (110). In his long poem called *Raghuvamsa*, Kalidasa "presents the idea of adopting the trees as the son by the Lord Siva," which indicates that oriental philosophy has sense of oneness with nature (qtd. in Natavar Joshi 111). According to *Vedanta*, the world appears real only to a person who is ignorant. Once he or she realizes *Brahman* or *Pramatman* or supreme soul, the world disappears and the person sees only the transcendent.

American transcendentalists have indicated exactly towards such methods and end. There is no fundamental difference in meaning between their coinage of "soul," "universal soul" or "Over Soul" and *Vedantic atman, pramatma* or *brahman*. There is nothing wrong in the transcendentalists' taking the meanings symbolized by objects of nature like water as "universal soul," which further indicates the oneness of all the objects of nature. The ecocritics call this as 'interconnectedness' or 'wholeness.' There is difference only in name, not in the concept. In this sense, spirituality is the very inherent quality of the project of ecocriticism. One of the basic elements of deep ecology is self realization. "Self realization means identification with a larger organic "Self" beyond the individual person; or "self-in-Self" as they put it" (Dryzek 197). The idea is to cultivate a deep consciousness and awareness of the organic unity, of

the holistic nature of the ecological webs in which every individual is enmeshed.

Similar is the objective of the whole American transcendentalism.

The adaptability of American transcendental claim of spirituality in nature can be verified also in terms of pantheistic notions. From the pantheistic view, nature is divine, which is generally understood in spiritual sense. H. P. Owen opines, “God is everything and everything is God.... The world is either identical with God or in some way a self-expression of his name” (74). He further puts: “If God (theos) is identical with the Universe (to pan) it is merely another name for the Universe” (69-70). Like that of American transcendentalism, it is the view that worldly things constitute a unity, and that all-inclusive unity is in some sense divine. Like a typical American transcendentalist such as Whitman or Thoreau, the pantheist tries to live in accordance with the unity and the values intrinsically associated with it. In this sense, American transcendental similitude with pantheism can be well recognized.

Pantheism is often taken to be a view inherently sympathetic to ecological concerns. (Michael P. Levine 2: 139). As the whole effort of American transcendentalism is to lead one to identify with nature, it cannot be said to have had less concern with nature. American transcendental ethics, pantheistic ethics, environmental ethics, ethics more generally are grounded in the concept of divine unity, the unifying principle that accounts for our commonality with other living and nonliving things. So far as the attached name “transcendental” is concerned, the American transcendentalists never used the term to mean that God is beyond as an unrecognizable entity. Instead, they used the term to mean that God, which is generally taken to be transcendental, is not transcendental in the real sense but is symbolized in the forms of nature. Kant, the originator of the term “transcendental,” also used it to mean that God is a concept that can be understood not by experiencing but by reasoning.



The main stream ecocriticism is earth centered and hence does not comply with the concept of soul. However, some ecocritics seek truth of human nature in nature. Similarly, some ecocritics like Lovelock offer to take earth as Gaia or super organism. These could be taken as a step of ecocriticism towards realizing spirituality in nature. American transcendental concept of spirituality in nature can be rectified by taking references from the practices of Hindu *Rsis*. Pantheists' notion of taking organic unity of things as God is very much similar to that of American transcendentalists' notion of soul in nature. Thus ecocriticism could cognize spirituality in nature as it is more a unifying concept. From this lack of unifying concept in ecocriticism could be fulfilled.

### **Summary**

To summarize, Emerson's *Nature* reflects his central concept that nature holds spiritual reality. This is completely a new ideology from the then existed religious, empirical, and materialistic philosophies of reasoning. As these philosophies were outward turning, they had nothing to do with nature. But Emerson's is the inward turning nature friendly philosophy. He takes objects of nature including human being as the manifestation of spiritual reality. Since spiritual reality is embedded in the symbols of nature, truth is latent or suggestive in nature, not manifest. Emerson attributes the job of human language as to represent this symbolical manifestation of the spiritual reality and human job as to recognize this and apply in life.

As Emerson takes human beings as the part of nature, he invites people to know the truths about life by assimilating themselves with nature. According him, when one reasons by applying nature into life, one's every conclusion becomes a reflection of the original, to which he calls as truth, "universal soul" or "Over-Soul." In such a state, as Emerson asserts, all kinds of binary-oppositions like man/nature,

subject/object are dissolved: everything becomes “ONE” as this “ONE” is the source of everything. Emerson's whole philosophy is built in such spiritual concepts.

Emerson takes human language as the representation of universal spirit as, for him, words are the symbols of the objects of nature, which in turn represent universal spirit. He believes that the more one leads simple life by remaining in the contact of nature, the more one can use correct language. Such a person can understand the "universal spirit" to which he also calls as "essence" or "original cause" or "Over-Soul" or "God". His or her conducts become not anthropocentric but non-anthropocentric or biocentric, in which he or she does not make any hierarchy between human beings and nature. The whole nature or universal spirit is reflected in his or her conducts. And hence only virtues are reflected in his or her behavior. He harms no one and hence harmony is created in him or herself and in the environment.

Catching such transcendental concepts of Emerson, there started American literary and philosophical movement called American transcendentalism, which proposed to view life from the perspective of nature. Unlike the outward tuning religious, empirical and materialistic philosophies of the time, it is inward turning. It seeks to develop inward understanding of people from the observation of universal spirit imbedded in the objects of nature. The observer first verifies the elements of nature with his her intuition or conscience, which are applicable to everyone. If an element of nature is applicable to all, he or she takes it as truth and hence applies in life.

Though ecocriticism is also a nature centered approach, main stream ecocriticism has not incorporated the concept of soul. It is earth centered approach of viewing life. It studies human and nature relationship by gathering physical or scientific connectivity between them. However, within ecocriticism there is an

undercurrent of taking nature as the source of truth and the earth as the super organism or Gaia. It could be taken as one step of ecocriticism towards realizing soul as the unifying concept. From Emerson, ecocriticism could develop some ideas in showing human and nature connectivity. For instance, it could especially learn from him to show human and nature connectivity both physically and spiritually. As spirituality of nature is a biocentric feature, shown earlier, main stream ecocriticism could apply it in its practice without hesitation. From this human connectivity with nature could be defined more solidly, which would in turn be helpful in further developing ecocriticism as the literary and critical philosophy of the time. Next chapter studies how Thoreau views human and nature relationship.

## CHAPTER IV

### THOREAU'S *WALDEN*: HUMAN BEING AS NATURE

Henry David Thoreau's paramount work *Walden* is a philosophized report of his staying at the Walden Pond for two years. It implicitly presents human being akin to nature. This chapter studies how Thoreau takes human being so and how it is significant to human life. As a report of Thoreau's experience at the Walden Pond, *Walden* implies that man is like nature not only physically but also spiritually. It also contends that nature is the beholder of truth, which is seated in it in deep harmonic order in the form of soul. Human job is to discern them and apply in life. For this what one has to do, as Thoreau asserts, is that one should make oneself as innocently simple and wise as nature and apply its common features into life for peace, progress and happiness.

Thoreau, as an inquisitive man to know meanings of life, read history of travel and exploration that could suggest possible ways of experiencing with life. He also read Greek, Roman, English, Hindu classics. He published *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* and *Walden*, the records of his observation of nature. He became able to produce only some chapter of *The Mine Woods* and of *Cape Cod*. Majority of his works were published posthumously: *Walking*, *Autumn Times*, *Wild Apples*, *Life Without Principle*, *Night and Moonlight*, *Excursions*, *The Mine Woods*, *Cape Cod*, *Letters to Various Poems*, *A Yankee in Canada*, *with Anti-Slavery and Reform Papers*, *Early Spring in Massachusetts*, *Summer*, *Winter*, *Autumn*.

Thoreau was little known as a writer during his short life time. But by the 1930s he had attained the status of a major American voice. From the next decades his literary rank began to exalt even Emerson's. Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. successfully applied his concept of non-violent resistance in their freedom

fighting. Counter cultural movements of 1960s and 1970s helped to establish Thoreau as a great American prophet. Since the 1980s his approaches to nature have become models to the nature writers like John Muir, Aldo Leopold, Edward Abbey, and Annie Dillard. According to Lawrence Buell, "If literary history is to be reimagined under the sign of environment, Thoreau will certainly continue to be one of the key points of reference, ..." (*Environmental Imagination* 367). *Walden* is his representative work: "In *Walden* Thoreau's whole character emerges" (Baym 850-51).

Though it is Emerson who first brings forth nature friendly views in North America, it is Thoreau who first experiments them. As Emerson says, one has only to give attention to some aspect of nature to make a day holy. Thoreau contributes to this by focusing on the specific natural environment in which we live and move. He observes human and nature relationship not from the back drop but by remaining in and being just as nature of the Walden Pond. His aim of doing so is to discern original human and nature relationship. In *Walden*, Thoreau states that nature is the beholder of truth and if humans have to know truth they can do so not remaining aloof from nature but by assimilating themselves into it, no matter spiritually, as they are no more different but its part. He presents the fact that when you know your seasons, your animals, your birds, your trees, and you know not only a great deal about yourself but also the particular path to transcendence available in the place where you live. Walter Harding claims that Thoreau's "ultimate goal was to find his place in the universe" (100). Similarly Lawrence Buell puts, "Thoreau became increasingly interested in defining nature's structure, both spiritual and material, for its own sake, as against how nature might subserve humanity ..." (*Environmental Imagination* 117). *Walden* records Thoreau's conclusion that as humans are the parts of nature they can enjoy the bliss of nature by applying its features into life.

Following passage extracted from the second chapter of *Walden* entitled "Where I Lived and What I Lived for" presents Thoreau's purpose of going to the Walden Pond and the overall project of the book:

I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. I did not wish to live what was not life, living is so dear; nor did I wish to practice resignation, unless it was quite necessary. I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life, to live so sturdily and Spartan-like as to put to rout all that was not life, to cut a broad swath and shave close, to drive life into a corner, and reduce it to its lowest terms, and, if it proved to be mean, why then to get the whole and genuine meanness of it, and publish its meanness to the world; or if it were sublime, to know it by experience, and be able to give a true account of it in my next excursion. For most men, it appears to me, are in a strange uncertainty about it, whether it is of the devil or of God, and have somewhat hastily concluded that it is the chief end of man here to "glorify God and enjoy him forever." (915)

It shows that *Walden* is Thoreau's expedition to find the basics of human life. He wants to know this from his own experiment because he knows that knowing something from experience is something more true and of greater scope and depth than knowing it from abstract reasoning. As a scientific minded inquisitive man, Thoreau knows that if he has to discover some truth about life, he can do so by means of facts. And if he knew some truths about life he would put forth to the public for

consideration. He determines to know such truths about life because he feels that people of his time were confused about life and hastily concluded to glorify God.

In *Nature Writing and America: Essay upon a Cultural Type*, Peter Fritzezell presents Thoreau's purpose of going to the Walden Pond. They are:

To present an environmentalist's point of view in a personal voice. To immerse the person, the personal voice, in an environment. To deny the self and affirm the environment. To deny the environment and celebrate the self. To view the self as a product of its environment and celebrate the self. To view the self as a product of its environment and the environment as a product of the self. To view the self as a metaphor for the environment and the environment as a metaphor of or for the self. Such is the habit and the strategy of the self-conscious ecologist, the man at Walden. (189)

Thoreau's purpose of going to the Walden Pond is to know interrelation between human being and nature. What Thoreau does in the Walden Pond is to dissolve himself into nature and speak from its point of view.

*Walden* is an account of Thoreau's experiment and observation of nature by living in the forest of the Walden Pond to know and "enjoy an original relationship to the universe" (Bloom, *Henry David Thoreau* 2). Thoreau accomplishes his self-guided task from his two years of arduous study of nature. *Walden* is a book completely dedicated in showing how to live wisely. It presents how Thoreau lived and felt there and thereby it accounts what reflection he made for life. According to Michael Cisco, "*Walden* assumes paramount importance in any consideration of Thoreau's literary career" (59). Similarly, Leigh Kathryn Jenco views that "Again and again in *Walden* ... he [Thoreau] offers the Transcendentalist dependence of moral

understanding on the laws made manifest through careful scrutiny of the natural world" (359). Lawrence Buell takes *Walden* as the transitional work as it represents Thoreau's "youthful anthropocentric transcendentalism to the mature, biocentric perspective revealed in the late essays on wilderness ..." (Garrard 52). The reflection Thoreau records in *Walden* for human life from his experiment and observation of nature is that humans are no more different from nature. And hence they should make their conducts that match the harmony of nature.

As a strong believer of this transcendental concept, what Thoreau does in *Walden* is to show explicitly or implicitly the human and nature physical and spiritual relations so that harmony could emerge not only among humans but also between humans and nature as the fundamental orders of both are same. "The value of wilderness Thoreau deems most important is spiritual" (Scheese 310). Thoreau implicitly states that human being is the part of nature, not different or its ruler. In further deep level, he implies that human being is nature. In "Cultivating the American Garden" Tuner asserts, "Our bodies and brains are a result of evolution, which is a natural process so paradigmatic that it could almost be said to be synonymous with nature itself" (42). Thoreau experiences exactly this.

In sum, *Walden* presents Thoreau's study of human and nature relationship. What he knows from his study is that human being is part of nature, no more its commander. I have taken this as the central theme of Thoreau. And hence this chapter studies this in detail. All the sub-headings below study Thoreau's views regarding human and nature relationship: they present why Thoreau goes to the Walden Pond, what he does there, what he finds. They also show what views he makes for life. And, finally, they show how Thoreau is similar to or different from ecocritics in regard to their views on human and nature relationship.



### **Thoreau's Trip to the Walden Pond: for Observation and Experiment**

Thoreau goes to live in the forest of the Walden Pond neither for recreation nor in his fanciful mood. Instead, he goes there with his great zeal to understand basic laws of human life that he thinks are embedded in nature, or for what Lawrence Buell calls as to make "economic and spiritual experiment" (*Environmental* 145). He goes there with his conviction that if one wants to express something about life at all one has to do so from one's own experience and feelings, not from what others say or write about. He goes there, like Whitman, to loaf and invite his soul for these.

Thoreau has such a conviction that even spiritual matter of God has to be experienced, not to be believed or theologized about. His theology is not a branch of metaphysics, it is an experience of life. Ellyn Sanna presents her impression on *Walden*: "Although *Walden* can be read on many levels, at its deepest it is Thoreau's spiritual creed, his statement of faith. If human beings would obey the light of God within them, *Walden* affirmed, they could attain fulfillment and happiness" (50-51). Thoreau believes that in deep level there is harmony between human and nature relationship because the essence or origin of both is the same. Thus, as a lover of humanity, Thoreau seeks for himself and for his fellowmen a fuller and more nearly natural self realization, a fulfillment more in harmony with the constituted quality of human being. He realizes that for this he has to realize himself first, which is possible, in his view, from the contact of nature. Sanna thinks, "Through nature, Thoreau touched the transcendental reality in which he believed" (33). As the transcendentalist, Thoreau believes that since there is transcendental unity between human being and nature, one needs only to observe and record one's experience honestly, thoroughly, and without prejudgment, and its own organic, inherent structure, its unity, will emerge on its own. So he goes to the Walden Pond without

delay not to escape from civilization but to discover true civilization that would permit and foster the greatest development of human beings' spiritual nature.

Thoreau's trip to the Walden Pond gives important glimpses of his views towards human and nature relationship. As a strong follower of Transcendentalism, he knows that nature is the source of inspiration. At the same time, he also knows that this cannot be attained without maintaining physical relation with nature. "In wilderness is the preservation of the world," Thoreau writes in "Walking." He further says, "From the forest and wilderness comes tonics and barks which brace mankind" (112). Scheese expresses similar views: "The resulting encounter with nature becomes a myth of self-education, a realization of autobiography and ecotopia ..." (233). This is the reason of Thoreau's giving importance to nature and going to the Walden Pond.

When Thoreau decides to go to the forest of the Walden Pond as a result of his inquisitiveness to know the essence or truth of human being in relation to nature, he does not care villagers' questions like what he would eat in the forest, he could feel lonesome, he might afraid, and the like. He is not tempted by the sophisticated life of the town. As a lover of natural life, he does not want fulfillment of the needs more than necessary. He regrets:

I see young men, my townsmen, whose misfortune it is to have inherited farms, houses, barns, cattle, and farming tools; for these are more easily acquired than got rid of. Better if they had been born in the open pasture and suckled by a wolf, that they might have seen with clearer eyes what field they were called to labor in. Who made them serfs of the soil? Why should they eat their sixty acres, when man is condemned to eat only his peck of dirt? Why should they begin digging their graves as soon as they are born? They have got to live a

man's life, pushing all these things before them, and get on as well as they can. (*Walden* 869)

Thoreau contends that one should know about life from one's own experience. In his view, living by being aloof from this opportunity is a kind of digging one's own grave. Thoreau does not reason what good it would be for him or others by learning from nature. He goes and stays at the Walden Pond without any consideration. For him, "work and life are a theory of fusion" (Bloom, *Henry* 1). Such a fusion needs a radical isolation, which he gets in the Walden Pond.

Thoreau is not satisfied with the carelessness of individuals towards knowing truth. He feels that the culture resulted from the Industrial Revolution was making people not responsible but mechanized. Thoreau laments:

Most men, even in this comparatively free country, through mere ignorance and mistake, are so occupied with the factitious cares and superfluously coarse labors of life that its finer fruits cannot be plucked by them. Their fingers, from excessive toil, are too clumsy and tremble too much for that. Actually, the laboring man has not leisure for a true integrity day by day; he cannot afford to sustain the manliest relations to men; his labor would be depreciated in the market. He has no time to be anything but a machine.... We should feed and clothe him gratuitously sometimes, and recruit him with our cordials, before we judge of him. The finest qualities of our nature, like the bloom on fruits, can be preserved only by the most delicate handling. Yet we do not treat ourselves nor one another thus tenderly. (*Walden* 870)

Thoreau feels that as people are too much occupied with factitious cares, they are forgetting to pluck finer fruits of life, i.e. know the realities of life. Because of this

they are not making healthy relations with fellow partners. As a humanist, Thoreau feels a responsibility to teach the ignorant people finest or natural qualities situated within them. He thinks that to discern and show natural qualities of the human being he should take help of nature.

Thoreau does not think that it is good to live only in the sensual and material comfort. He laments for truth: "Rather than love, than money, than fame, give me the truth" (*Walden* 965). In Thoreau's view, one should certainly make material progress but, at the same time, one should not forget one's attachment to truth or nature which runs with ordinariness and innocence rather than sophistication and cleverness.

According to Harding, "Thoreau's originality was in accepting the advantages of civilization without sacrificing the benefits of the wild" (116). Thoreau claims: "It would be well perhaps if we were to spend more of our days and nights without any obstruction between us and the celestial bodies, if the poet did not speak so much from under a root, or the saint dwell there so long. Birds do not sing in cave, nor do doves cherish their innocence in dovecots" (*Walden* 882). What Thoreau means to say is that as poets or saints speak out of their contemplation or birds do not sing in the caves or doves do not cherish their innocence in dove cots, one should not confine oneself in the cage of sophistication. For Thoreau, to know the infinite or celestial relation between the human being and nature one must lead ordinary, contemplative and free life, just like that of nature.

In the following extract, Thoreau expresses why it is necessary to know about nature. What he views is that nature is vast and one should take lesson from it for one's life. What a wise man can learn from nature is the universal innocence:

Our village life would stagnate if it were not for the unexplored forests and meadows which surround it. We need the tonic of wilderness ....

At the same time that we are earnest to explore and learn all things, we require that all things be mysterious and unexplorable, that land and sea be infinitely wild, unsurveyed and unfathomed by us because unfathomable. We can never have enough of Nature. We must be refreshed by the sight of inexhaustible vigor, vast and Titanic features, the sea-coast with its wrecks, the wilderness with its living and its decaying trees, the thunder cold, and the rain which lasts three weeks and produces freshets. We need to witness our own limits transgressed, and some life pasturing freely where we never wander .... With the liability to accident, we must see how little account is to be made of it. The impression made on a wise man is that of universal innocence.

(*Walden* 958-59)

Thoreau's approach is, on the contrary, occupied with concrete things. Understanding truth through nature Thoreau calls as 'awakening'. He thinks that "there are as many ways as there can be drawn radii from one centre" (*Walden* 873). And all change is equally important and miracle to contemplate. He envisions, "When one man has reduced a fact of the imagination to be a fact to his understanding, I foresee that all men will at length establish their lives on the basis" (*Walden* 873). What Thoreau means to say is that imagination is necessary to know and decide about the ways of life but this should be verified from the understanding reasoned from the contact of nature, and anyone who tries can do it.

For Thoreau, knowing the ways of life becomes possible when one reforms oneself from the study of the laws of nature. So human being and nature's visible as well as subtle connections cannot be understood from common people's static kind of life. Common people make almost similar kind of life as their parents or grandparents

had. Consequently, they remain the same as they were in the past. But Thoreau does not prefer this mode of static life. He posits thus:

One young man of my acquaintance, who has inherited some acres, told me that he thought he should live as I did, *if he had the means*. I would not have any one adopt *my* mode of living on any account; for, beside that before he has fairly learned it I may have found out another for myself, I desire that there may be as many different persons in the world as possible; but I would have each one be very careful to find out and pursue *his own* way, and not his father's or his mother's or his neighbor's instead. (*Walden* 905)

Thoreau believes that no one should follow any another's mode of life. One should carve one's way of life from one's own understanding. This is one of the reasons of Thoreau's going to the solitary place. Harding admits his understanding of Thoreau like this:

From the beginning of his life to the very end, Thoreau believed that all reform must come from within and cannot be imposed by any outside force. We cannot reform society; we can reform only the individual. When each individual reforms himself, then the reformation of society will automatically follow. (109)

Thoreau believes that reformation of society is possible only from the reformation of individuals. For him reformation or progress is the nature of human being. What one has to do for this is to turn towards nature. Susan Fenimore Cooper puts in *Rural Hours*, "Persuade a careless, indolent man to take an interest in his garden, and his reformation has begun" (qtd. in Lawrence Buell, *Environmental* 1). From the caves man has attained the sophistication of the town. Thus many might frown at the

philosophy of turning to nature for the knowledge of human conducts. This is what the transcendentalists faced.

However, for Thoreau, sophistication alone is not sufficient unless one knows the universal values of life. By going to live in the forest of the Walden Pond, Thoreau wants to know how it would be to live in the primitive life in the midst of the industrial revolution which was making men more and more mechanized and unsympathetic to one another. Thoreau speculates,

It would be some advantage to live a primitive and frontier life, though in a midst of an outward civilization, if only to learn what are the gross necessities of life and what methods have been taken to obtain them; .... For the improvements of ages have had but little influence on essential laws of man's existence; as our skeletons, probably, are not to be distinguished from those of our ancestors. (*Walden* 873)

Thoreau believes that by living in the nature of the Walden Pond he would know the gross necessities of life and the methods our ancestors took to obtain this. He wants to know this because no matter how much human being has progressed materially, our fundamental needs do not increase so much as we are not fundamentally different from our ancestors. So Thoreau thinks that if we make life style simple like that of our ancestors, we don't need to struggle so hard for life and be uncooperative to one another: "In short, I am convinced, both by faith and experience, that to maintain one's self on this earth is not hardship but a pastime, if we live simply and wisely" (*Walden* 905). The advantage Thoreau sees in "The very simplicity and nakedness of man's life in the primitive ages" is that he was free and "still a sojourner in nature. When he was refreshed with food and sleep he contemplated his journey again" (*Walden* 887). But Thoreau finds men of his time to have been totally mechanized: "But lo! men have

become tools of theirs tools," Thoreau exclaims (*Walden* 887). According to Thoreau, if we lead our life limply or naturally, "we should never be troubled with ennui" (*Walden* 921). He further states, "In proportion as he simplifies his life, the laws of the universe will appear less complex ..." (*Walden* 961-62). This is Thoreau's love for simple and natural life.

To summarize, Thoreau is not satisfied with the existed static religious or materialistic life. He knows that these modes have made man passive and mechanistic. As influenced by Emerson's nature based transcendental concepts, he thinks that there must be deeper bonds between human and nature relationship. But he is not ready to take it until it is verified from his own observation. Thus he goes to stay in the forest of the Walden Pond to know human being's place in the universe. He is very much sure that he will be able to know it. Following section presents what Thoreau gets in the Walden Pond.

### **Thoreau's Experience as Nature**

One may wonder how and what a person may learn from nature. He or she might get answer from how and what Thoreau learns by living in the lap of nature of the Walden Pond. Thoreau's understanding of nature can be known from how he takes himself during his stay there. During his experiment and observation of nature he takes himself as the very nature place. He was "committed to nature's interest over the human interest" (Buell, *Environmental* 135). The lesson he takes from this is that human being is the part of nature, not its master. Thus one can understand nature and take its bliss by immersing oneself into it. This is what Thoreau does during his stay in the forest. Emerson praises Thoreau like this: "He was equally interested in every natural fact. The depth of his perception found likeness of law throughout Nature, and I know not any genius who so swiftly inferred universal law from the single fact"



(“Thoreau” 91). From the knowledge of universal law acquired at the Walden Pond, Thoreau not only remains in the blissful state but returns completely a new –a man full of humanity and humility with holistic world view.

How Thoreau lives in the Walden Pond can be understood from how he feels at the beginning and afterwards. Sometimes Thoreau wonders why he came to the solitary place. His nearest neighbor is a mile away. No house is visible from his self made house but hill tops situated within half a mile. His horizon is bounded by woods all around:

I have never felt lonesome, or in the least oppressed by a sense of solitude, but once, and that was a few weeks after I came to the woods, when, for an hour I doubted if the near neighborhood of man was not essential to a serene and healthy life. To be alone was something unpleasant. But I was at the same time conscious of a slight insanity in my mood, and seemed to foresee my recovery. In the midst of a gentle rain while these thoughts prevailed, I was suddenly sensible of such sweet and beneficent society in Nature, in the very pattering of the drops, and in every sound and sight around my house, an infinite and unaccountable friendliness all at once like an atmosphere sustaining me, as made the fancied advantages of human neighborhood insignificant, and I have never thought of them since. (*Walden* 930-31)

Though Thoreau feels loneliness at the Walden Pond at the beginning, he immediately takes his feeling of loneliness as “a slight insanity” in his mood. He immediately becomes sensible of sweet and beneficent society in nature. He soon establishes a friendly relationship with nature: “I was more the friend than the foe of the pine tree, though I had cut down some of them, having become better acquainted with it”

(*Walden* 889). In the very pattering of rain drops, and in every sound and sight around his house, he finds an infinite and unaccountable friendliness all at once like an atmosphere sustaining him. He feels the fancied advantages of human neighborhood to be insignificant.

What Thoreau in fact learns from the Walden Pond is not any different but to be like its nature –simple and innocent. He feels to be its part. R. L. Predmore presents the way of knowing ourselves: "Not till we are lost ... do we begin to find ourselves, and realize where we are, and the infinite extent of our relations" (41). Thoreau does just the same in the forest of the Walden Pond. Thoreau's "true quest was to enjoy an original relationship to the universe" (Bloom, *Henry* 2). He feels himself no lonelier than the loon in the pond, or the Walden Pond itself. He asks what company that lonely lake has got. The sun is alone. God is alone. Only the devil is far from being alone: he is always in a great deal of company. Thoreau reasons: "I am no more lonely than a single mullein or dandelion in a pasture, or a bean leaf, or sorrel, or a horse-fly, or a humblebee. I am no more lonely than the Mill Brook, or a weathercock, or the northstar, or the south wind, or an April shower, or a January thaw, or the first spider in a new house" (*Walden* 933). It is Thoreau's mingling himself with nature. He takes his status not different from the worth of the humblebee or spider for them. Like Thoreau, Drummond puts, "It is difficult to conceive anything better of its kind than a lily or a cedar, an ant or an ant-eater. These organisms, so far as we can judge, lack nothing. It might be said of them, they are complete in Nature" (277). Comparing Thoreau and Unamuno, Predmore says that "Both were able to feel a profound sense of identification with Nature" (38). Feeling bore with the surfeit and gossip of human society, Thoreau "rambled still farther westward than I habitually dwell, into yet more unfrequented parts of the town, to

fresh woods and pastures new, or, while the sun was setting, made my supper of huckleberries and blueberries on Fair Haven Hill, and laid up a store for several days" (*Walden* 934). Rueckert acknowledges, "The resulting encounter with nature becomes a myth of self-education, a realization of autobiography and ecotopia, and heartens the receptive reader ..." (305). This is the reason Thoreau's going further deep into nature. He takes mingling oneself with nature as understanding the earth.

Following extract further proves Thoreau confluence with nature. He feels that he is no more different from nature:

The indescribable innocence and beneficence of Nature, -of sun and wind and rain, of summer and winter, -such health, such cheer, they afford forever! And such sympathy have they ever with our race, that all Nature would be affected, and the sun's brightness fade, and the winds would sigh humanely, and the clouds rain tears, and the woods shed their leaves and put on mourning in midsummer, if any man should ever for a just cause grieve. Shall I not have intelligence with the earth? Am I not partly leaves and vegetable mould myself?

(*Walden* 934)

Thoreau expresses not only owe to the system of nature that provides life but also his veneration to its mechanism. Being a human being he does not take himself different from nature. Reducing oneself to the part or level of nature like this is an absolute biocentric rendering. For Christopher D. Stone humans should understand this and act accordingly to keep this: "Man is a part of this organic planetary whole; and there can be no truly new global society ... as long as man will not recognize, accept and enjoy the fact that mankind has a definite function to perform within this planetary organism of which it is an active part" (474). Mainly because of Thoreau's such confluence

with nature, in *The Environmental Imagination* Buell takes Thoreau as the prophetic center of nature writings. William Howarth also regards him as the culmination of his purpose of nature writing: "Thoreau brings my account to an end, for he is the author who wrote, 'Shall I not have intelligence with the earth? Am I not part leaves and vegetable mould myself'" (87)? Thoreau feels that he is just like leaves and vegetable moulds.

Thoreau's such a use of language is certainly different from the conventional use. It is because conventional mode of language treats human being as the master of nature. In this sense, Thoreau is true with the biologists and the ecocritics. Christopher Manes puts,

From the perspective of biological adaptation, elephants are no "higher" than earwigs; salamanders are no less "advanced" than sparrows; cabbages have as much evolutionary status as kings. Darwin invited our culture to face the fact that in the observation of nature there exists not one scrap of evidence that humans are superior to or even more interesting than, say lichen. (22)

By taking the reference of Charles Darwin, Manes acknowledges that human being is not higher or lower from other members of the biotic community. Thoreau presents such an idea of human and nature affinity long before Darwin and ecocritics. Like Thoreau Terry Gifford in "The Social Construction of Nature" opines, "Our semiology of nature keeps us sane by reminding us that we are animals" (174). Similarly, by mentioning the notion of Donna Haraway, Jhan Hochman presents a rhetoric question that since "there is no longer any convincing boundary between human and animals, why should animals not be represented by people, just as people are represented by people" (190). Haraway wants animals to be treated like humans.

Patrick D. Murphy also presents similar view: "Ecology as a discipline means, fundamentally, the study of the environment in its interanimating relationships, its change and conservation, with humanity recognized as a part of the planetary ecosystem" (194). In *Refuge: An Unnatural History of Family and Place*, Terry Tempest Williams contests boundaries of all sorts. She collapses the separation between person and place in the statements like "I am desert. I am mountains. I am Great Salt Lake" (29). Observer and observed likewise fuse as Williams recalls of her mother, "I began breathing with her. ... Mother and I became one. One breathing organism" (230). From these examples it can be said about Thoreau that his treating himself as nature has so much reason.

Thoreau reveals his desire that if he had to choose between God or Heaven and Walden, he would choose the latter. Its reason is that he takes himself no more than the nature of the Walden Pond, its stony shore, its wind, its water and sand:

It is no dream of mine,  
To ornament a line;  
I cannot come nearer to God and Heaven  
Than I live to Walden even.  
I am its stony shore,  
And the breeze that passes o'er;  
In the hallow of my hand  
Are its water and its sand,  
And its deepest resort  
Lies high in my thought. (*Walden* 945)

Thoreau not only takes himself as the physical parts of the Walden Pond but also as its spirit. He thinks that its spirit or "deepest resort" is his thought. It means that his

thought is no more different from the spirit of the nature of the Walden Pond. This is Thoreau's not only turning to nature, but being absorbed into it, which he in turn takes as turning to his own natural state. He views that "A man must find his occasions in himself, it is true" (*Walden* 920). According to him a natural day is calm, not necessarily a lazy one. He says that others would go abroad, to society or to the theatre for amusement, but for him, his life itself was amusement: "It was a drama of many senses and without an end" (*Walden* 921). He conceives, "Every morning was a cheerful invitation to make my life of equal simplicity, and I may say innocence, with Nature herself" (*Walden* 914). Barry Lopez expresses just like what Thoreau did: "One learns a landscape finally not by knowing the name or identity of everything in it, but by perceiving the relationships in it –like that between the sparrow and the twig ..." (qtd. in L. Buell, *Environmental* 83). This proves the reason of Thoreau's fusing himself into nature.

How much Thoreau absorbs himself with nature can be well understood also from his following activities. One of his friends recalls what Thoreau did when he met him once in the Walden Pond:

"Keep very still and I will show you my family," Thoreau suddenly said to him, and then he stepped quickly outside the cabin door and gave a low whistle. A woodchuck responded to the call, running toward him from a nearby burrow. With another whistle, he summoned a pair of gray squirrels that exhibited no fear as they ran up to him. Then he gave still another whistle, and several birds, including two crows, flew toward him; one of the crows settled comfortably on his shoulder. Thoreau fed all the animals with food from his pocket and gently patted them. (Sanna 6)

Thoreau and the birds and squirrels live as his family members. Thoreau lives in that way because he does not make any difference between himself and other species and behaves accordingly.

Thoreau recalls similar situation that happened with him:

At the approach of spring the red-squirrels got under my house, two at a time, directly under my feet as I sat reading or writing, and kept up the queerest chuckling and chirruping and vocal pirouetting and gurgling sounds that ever were heard; and when I stamped they only chirruped the louder, as if past all fear and respect in their mad pranks, defying humanity to stop them. (*Walden* 954)

The animals come to him without fear because they must have taken him as one of their community members. Thoreau is the first naturalist or ecologist who studied nature by fusing himself in it. In "Thoreau and "Ecology": Correction," Walter Harding brings the history: "Even if Thoreau did not coin the word, he was unquestionably a pioneer in the science of ecology" (707). Ernst Haeckel originated the word 'ecology' in 1866.

In the following extract, Thoreau expresses how he feels in the forest. He feels that the sweetest and tender, the most innocent and encouraging society could be found in any natural object, even for the poor misanthrope and most melancholic person:

Yet I experience sometimes that the most sweet and tender, the most innocent and encouraging society may be found in any natural object, even for the poor misanthrope and most melancholy man. There can be no very black melancholy to him who lives in the midst of Nature and has his senses still. There was never yet such a storm but it was

AEolian music to a healthy and innocent ear. Nothing can rightly compel a simple and brave man to vulgar sadness. While I enjoy the friendship of the seasons I trust that nothing can make life a burden to me. (*Walden* 930)

Thoreau feels that there could be no any black melancholy to one who lives in nature and has his senses still. A simple and brave person would never be sad in the lap of nature. Thoreau treats himself no more superior but friendlier to the nature. "I never found the companion that was so companionable as solitude," confesses Thoreau (*Walden* 933). Nature is always noiseless. All its greatest gifts are given in secret. So when Thoreau enjoys the friendship of the seasons, nothing could make it like a burden.

Some people might take Thoreau's study of nature by mingling himself into her as a mere idleness. Cisco claims:

Some critics indict Thoreau for being a false prophet, a performer caricaturing "the philosopher" or "the hermit," perhaps in a shortsighted, hero-worshipping imitation of Emerson. Thoreau made his life the principal exercise-ground of his philosophy. (76)

But Thoreau thinks that from the standards of the society people could take him so, but if he is judged from the standard of birds or flowers i.e. nature, he may not be found so: with his sense to have been effused in nature Thoreau claims, "if the birds and flowers had tried me by their standard, I should not have been found wanting" (*Walden* 920). Lawrence Buell expresses similar view:

This approach to subjectivity makes apparent that the "I" has no greater claims to bring the main subject than the chickens, the chopped corn, the mice, the snakes, and the phoebes –who are somehow also



interwoven with me. To get this point across, environmental writing has to be able to imagine nonhuman agents as bona fide partners."

(*Environment* 179)

Like Thoreau, Lawrence Buell treats himself as the partner of animals. Showing such a human and nature analogous relationship, though indirectly, is one of the greatest truths Thoreau discovers.

In sum, what Thoreau learns from his experiment and observation of nature is that laws of human life are related to the order of nature and hence one can learn these from it. One can know these when one studies nature by being no more different from it. Hence Thoreau studies nature not as an observer but by being completely dissolved into it. By doing so, he does not feel to be lonely or in need of something. Sometimes he goes further deep into the forest to remain away from the human touch. The birds, animals and other species also take him as one of their members: they come to him without any fear. What Thoreau concludes is that human being is not different from nature: "Man is an animal who more than any other can adopt himself to all climates and circumstances" (Thoreau, *Walden* 901). And hence the more one remains in nature, i. e. follows the order of nature, the more one can be full and happy.

### **Nature as the Beholder of Truth**

It would be worth knowing what Thoreau finds in nature from his study by dissolving himself into it. He finds nature to be the beholder of truth and hence immortal too. As he believes that nature bears truth, he assigns human job as to know this and make conducts accordingly. For this he advises one not to rely completely on books or what other people have said. But he hardly finds any person inclined to do so. He believes that however difficult or easy the path, men have to understand the path cast by nature and follow it accordingly.

As Thoreau believes nature to be the beholder of truth, he takes it as the source of finding truth and sublimity. An understanding that nonhuman life transmits precise information without resource to human languages allows human culture to reassert its own necessary connection with nature. To expose just this is the sole aim of Thoreau. In the following passage, Thoreau offers thus to take lessons for life from the nature that surrounds us:

In eternity there is indeed something true and sublime. But all these times and places and occasions are now and here. God himself culminates in the present moment, and will never be more divine in the lapse of all the ages. And we are enabled to apprehend at all what is sublime and noble only by the perpetual instilling and drenching of the reality which surrounds us. The universe constantly and obediently answers to our conceptions; whether we travel fast or slow, the track is laid for us. Let us spend our lives in conceiving them. The poet or the artist never yet had so fair and noble a design but some of his posterity at least could accomplish it. (*Walden* 918-19)

In Thoreau's view, eternity is something true and sublime and it is embedded in nature. Like Thoreau, John Elder contends, "Because nature is demonstrably there in its own terms, it becomes available once more for integration with the human cycle of life. It is neither inert nor a fabric of poetic conventions: earth's culture and human culture include and nourish one another" (233). Therefore, one can know this only by the perpetual instilling and drenching of the reality in the nature that surrounds us.

Once Thoreau's mother asks him in the late night, "Why Henry dear, don't you go to sleep?" He replies, "Mother, I have been looking through the stars to see if I could see God behind them" (Sanna 9). Thoreau believes that if we turn to nature, it

constantly and obediently answers our queries and enriches our conceptions. Like him Moore puts, "We all live in particular places. There can be no abstract spirituality. The ultimate paradox taught by many religions is that the absolutely sublime is to be found in the absolutely ordinary. The universality so loved by the spirit can be discovered only in each locality" (182). As this Thoreau views that our job is to lead our life by conceiving the laid track, i.e. order of nature. Sooner or later we have to follow the track laid by nature, this is our fate and destiny. According to Thoreau, no poet or artist has ever adopted the noble design of nature. He laments, "The millions are awake enough for physical labor; but only one in a million is awake enough for effective intellectual exertion, only one in a hundred millions to a poetic or divine life. To be awake is to be alive. I have never yet met a man who was quite awake" (*Walden* 915). Thoreau hopes that some of his posterity might accomplish it. Living without knowing about life is no life for him. Thus he pleads the reader to spend at least one day as deliberately as nature so that he or she would be tempted to do the same in other days as well.

As Thoreau takes nature as the beholder of truth and oneness, he sees the Walden Pond "as much Asia or Africa as New England" (*Walden* 930). He finds the characters of Walden to be the best, purest and immortal. The same water that he saw in his youth flows in it. It has not acquired any permanent wrinkle after all its ripples. It has the same woodland lake that he had discovered so many years before. Some of its trees have been cut down the previous year but others are springing up by its shore as lustily as ever. If there is some change, it is not in the pond and its surrounding forest but in the beholder: "Thus it seemed that one hillside illustrated the principle of all the operations of Nature" (Thoreau, *Walden* 953). Thus "nature was the source of

his deepest literary and spiritual inspiration" for him (Sanna 5). Thoreau feels himself to be happiest when he remains in the woods of the Walden Pond.

A child represents the natural state of human being. Thoreau reveals that he has always been regretting as he is not as wise as he had been born. He feels so because like others he has also fallen from the garden of natural state into the delirium of society. He takes intellect as a cleaver as it "discerns and rifts its way into the secret of things" which becomes a true guide for human beings (*Walden* 919). He further puts, "I think that the richest vein is somewhere hereabouts; so by the divining rod and thin rising vapors I judge; and here I begin to mine" (*Walden* 919-20). He takes his head as an organ for burrowing his way of life through nature.

As nature is the beholder of truth for Thoreau, like Emerson, he rejects knowledge taken from books however classic they are. For him they are mere dialects and provincial. They make one forget the plain language cast by all things and events of nature. Thoreau keeps the suggestive language of nature even above history, philosophy or poetry, no matter how well selected they are. He suggests that one should judge one's fate by seeing what is before –nature –and pave the way for future accordingly. Thoreau puts thus:

But while we are confined to books, though the most select and classic, and read only particular written languages, which are themselves but dialects and provincial, we are in danger of forgetting the language which all things are events speak without metaphor, which alone is copious and standard. Much is published, but little printed. The rays which stream through the shutter will be no longer remembered when the shutter is wholly removed. No method or discipline can supersede the necessity of being forever on the alert. What is a course of history,

or philosophy, or poetry, no matter how well selected, or the best society, or the most admirable routine of life, compared with the discipline of looking always at what is to be seen? Will you be a reader, a student merely, or a seer? Read your fate, see what is before, you, and walk on into futurity. (*Walden* 920)

As Thoreau writes so he does at his hut in the Walden Pond. He goes to take bath in the pond in the morning and then sits at his sunny door way for the whole morning and day as quiet as nature only with the songs of birds and insects. He finds his mental growth from such kind of meditation through inaction: "I grew in those seasons like corn in the night, and they were far better than any work of the hands would have been.... I realized the Orientals mean by contemplation and the forsaking of works" (*Walden* 920). This is the influence of Buddhist and Oriental Hindu philosophies on him as they teach one to meditate to mingle oneself with the existence or soul or *brahma* by forsaking entanglement of senses with matters. Buddha had done what Thoreau did. Ian Harris explains Buddha's practice: "The Buddha lived a peripatetic life, expounding the implications of those insights for many decades before succumbing to the forces of dissolution intrinsic to all conditioned things" (120). McDowell thinks that, "Thoreau's understanding of Buddhism underlies much of his critique of American relationships to nature ..." (384). Similarly, Buell claims, "... the development of Thoreau's thinking about nature seems pretty clearly to move along a path from homocentrism toward biocentrism" (*Environmental* 138). Bible teaches to work six days and rest one day. Thoreau just reverses it and rests for six days. For him resting means writing and observing nature.

Cisco interprets *Walden* as the restoration of the fallen Eden, the heavenly garden or nature. Bible takes the birth of Jesus Christ as the Son of God sent by God

the Father to redeem the sins of humans. But *Walden* implies that God is already there in the garden of nature to redeem human sin of carelessness towards ignorance. What humans have to do is to find the natural track from the symbols of nature and lead life accordingly, -very much a biocentric practice. "Eden is already available. Nature is God's Providence to mankind, and observing it in its orderly operation, its economy and simplicity, is education enough in how God intends man to life" (Cisco 64). The fall of Adam is not the only one event of fall in the human history. It is a process or fate of human beings. "Each individual falls out of nature and into society's delirium" (Cisco 64). Knowing the eternal truth by integrating oneself to nature and making conducts accordingly is Thoreau's remedy to be redeemed. For him no state can redeem an individual in this regard. It is in the hand of the person him or herself.

In sum, from the observation and experiment of the nature of the Walden Pond, Thoreau reasons that nature is the beholder of truth. For him, nature is universal or God's design to redeem human being from ignorance. And thus humans should take nature as the source of inspiration, knowledge and conducts. Following section presents what moral philosophy he makes from this.

### **Thoreau's Moral Philosophy**

Out of his deep observation and realization of nature, Thoreau expresses his ideas regarding different aspects of human life. One of the popular and widely discussed ideas is his moral philosophy. This is worth mentioning here because it is related to his concept of higher law or wholeness of nature. Thoreau finds moral features as the core of nature. He prioritizes individuals rather than the government in the matter of imparting moral codes of life. Freedom, self-reliance and cultivation of one's own truth are all bounded up together in his philosophy.

When Thoreau knows laws and ways of human life from his two years of observation of the nature of the Walden Pond, he returns to his community life and talks about human conducts till the last of his life. Thoreau goes far beyond simple nature writing to become critics of society, of the state, and of the modern industrial culture. Lawrence Buell posits, "... it has become much harder in the 1990s than it was a half-century ago to insist that nature was "at bottom" a nominal concern for Thoreau and that his devotion to nature can be separated from his reform interests" (376). Thoreau has been as much regarded as a naturalist, so much regarded as a social reformist. He was not an escapist.

Thoreau's "Resistance to Civil Government" can be taken as the model of his moral philosophy. It introduces his notion of 'action from principal.' It presents Thoreau's view that right is perceived from nature and performed individually, not collectively. It is in fact a theory produced from Thoreau's assumption of the fact that one cannot perform right duty unless one does not understand what right is. And one cannot understand what right is unless one does not catch right way of perceiving this. For Thoreau, nature not only shows what right is but also teaches how to conduct with it.

Thoreau thinks that knowledge imparted by the intellectuals or the government agencies do not guarantee what right is. For him, it can be imparted only from nature, through its suggestive features. It is an epistemologically obscure higher law introduced by Thoreau's friend and mentor Emerson. Emerson explains his higher law as a kind of spiritual symbolism imparted by nature from which human being should perceive moral understanding. In *Nature* Emerson envisions: "All things are moral and in their boundaries changes have an unceasing reference to spiritual nature ... shall hint or thunder to man the laws of right or wrong, and echo the Ten

Commandments" (510). Jenco describes the higher law like this: "The higher law directs the outward appearance of nature, and nature itself acts as a metaphor describing an individual's place within the universe and the ongoing and inevitable interaction of substance and concept, body and mind, that manifest within that individual" (359). This transcendental higher law philosophy is that nature refines human understanding by revealing specific moral truths and guides their reason by imparting the holistic correspondence between thought and things. So for Thoreau, the knowledge imparted from the Walden Pond is no less true than ethics. He understands that all are the parts of the divine and each one implies all others and the whole.

Thoreau thus makes the individual responsible for both uncovering the laws of nature and employing them to evaluate and direct his or her conducts. Disagreement among the people who live in accord with the higher laws is impossible as nature, which represents the higher order, is harmonic and hence so will be the actions refined from the observation of nature. Thoreau does not see any difference between the higher law and the actions made from its realization "because to know the higher law is to recognize an obligation to obey it" (Jenco 360). This is what Thoreau means by 'action from principle'. He believes that if one does not or cannot make one's conducts intact with the higher laws, one is deprived from knowing and taking the pleasure of truth.

Thoreau's especially civil disobedience and support to John Brown fore-light the conflicts of moral obligations with political ones. Moral obligation or duties are good conducts towards others independent of any institutional role. In democracy, the majority government makes the institutional rules in the name of protecting justice under its assumptions that voting means consent, and that representation means



equality and hence makes its citizens to abide by the rules. Jenco takes Thoreau's living secluded in the forest of the Walden Pond as his "rejections of the convention that popular participation equals justice" (370). Thoreau finds democratic governments overtaking individual moral values instead of fulfilling its supposed job of securing them.

Thoreau takes the individual as the only source for moral authority to do right over the demands to act for the common good. This reduces political obligation to guide people for moral behavior. Thoreau takes political authority as the extension of the moral authority of persons. In his view, it is not the laws of nation that makes the citizens just, but vice-versa. For him, a just government is the one which is in accordance with the higher law and which saves its citizens' sole right to their moral authority or else they will not sanction it. In "Civil Disobedience" he asserts, "There will never be a really free and enlightened State, until the State comes to recognize the individual as a higher and independent power, from which all its own power and authority are derived, and treats him accordingly" (867). Thoreau "accepts the need for a government mechanism in order to make his life *less* political" (Jenco 362). In his view, such a democratic government must treat the citizens not as a dictator but just as a neighbor, who persuades another with his or her full conscience. Such reciprocity binds an individual to the community around him without the sacrifice of his or her moral autonomy.

If a government is forceful, Thoreau's alternative is resistance, not rebellion, however. As a reaction against the forceful government, he did not pay tax, thinking that it could bring public awareness against the unreasonable and forceful government. The government, instead of convincing him or being convinced from his argument, imprisoned him. He confronted it by saying, "I could not help but being

stuck with the foolishness of that institution which treated me as if I were mere flesh and blood and bones, to be locked up" ("Resistance to Civil Government" 861-62). He reasons, "Is there not a sort of bloodshed when the conscience is wounded? Through this wound a man's real manhood and immortality flow out, and then he bleeds to an everlasting death. I see this blood flowing now" (860). The court had declared death penalty to John Brown on his helping to the Black civil rights movements. Thoreau takes him as one of the model citizens of America.

Thoreau's belief in higher laws and his vision of social and political harmony are similar to that of his mentor, Emerson. However, whereas Emerson has more faith that things would be corrected gradually, Thoreau is more radical. Emerson criticizes democracy but not on fundamental grounds. Jenco compares Emerson and Thoreau like this: "Emerson's concern is simply that democracy as it is now practiced does not penetrate the American consciousness as profoundly as it may originally have promised to do. Thoreau's outlook is at once more militant and more morally centered" (363). Thoreau's civil disobedience is its result.

Some critics of Thoreau argue that his sentience-based consent to law cannot sustain universal applicability. Using one's personal conscience as a political guide would result in anarchy or worse, as no justification could be given for injurious behavior towards other individuals, nor could any vision of public good be conjured. Nancy Rosenblum asserts that for Thoreau "conscience has no identifiable content" and hence is unable to "create new social norms or inspire sociable relations" (qtd. in Jenco 360). However, for Thoreau, higher law does not need any arbitrary justification. When people rightly follow the laws of nature, the similar kind of harmony might be created in human communities as well. If there is some

disagreement, Thoreau maintains that some faintest assured objection which one healthy person feels will at length prevail over mankind.

Edward Abbey states his praise to Thoreau like this: "The few such writers whom I wholly admire are those, like Thoreau, who went far beyond simple nature writing to become critics of society, of the state, of our modern industrial culture.... It is not enough to understand nature; the point is to save it" (12). Jenco claims, "Thoreau embodies more famously than any American writer the spirit of freedom and individualism ...." (355). Harding expresses his impression of Thoreau: "One final word must be spoken on Thoreau's ideas. Thoreau was a critic of society, but primarily a positive rather than a negative critic" (132). He further claims that "Thoreau's originality was in accepting the advantages of civilization without sacrificing the benefits of the world (116). Thoreau was altogether a visionary. Leaders like Martin Luther King, Jr. in America and Mahatma Gandhi in India exemplified Thoreau's principles of non-violence put to action. In the present time he is venerated most by nature writers and ecocritics.

Thoreau's moral philosophy is related to his concept of higher law, which is represented in nature. He takes the individual, not the institutions, responsible for imparting moral codes. For him, institutions, including government, are extended forms of individual. Thus job of a just government is to create and save individuals' situations for developing moral values.

### **Human Being from the Ecocritical Perspective**

Human and nature relationship is the concern of ecocriticism as well. Question might arise, if Thoreau takes human being akin to nature, what might be the ecocritical stand regarding human and nature relationship? If nature is the concern of ecocriticism, Thoreau's concern is to see human relation with nature. Like Thoreau,

Ecocriticism does not give human being superior privilege over nature. The reason is that all organisms including human being are equally important in the biotic community as they have interconnected or complementary relationship. However, unlike Thoreau and other transcendentalists, ecocriticism does not openly plead that nature is the ultimate source of human knowledge and motivations. Thus if Thoreau offers to take human being not fundamentally different from nature and hence get lessons for life from it, ecocritics propose just to value nature for its own worth.

If Thoreau views human and nature relationship both in physical and spiritual terms, ecocriticism defines it basically in physical grounds. Glotfelty opines, "Simply put, ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the environment... ecocriticism takes an earth-centered approach to literary studies" (xix). Ecocritics believe that other organisms have also their own worth of life, humans cannot and should not be taken as higher or lower to them; instead they are complementary to one another as one organism's existence is guaranteed by other organisms' existence.

Thoreau appears to have gone deeper than the ecocritics in the matter of giving importance to nature. Like ecocritics, he takes human being as the part of nature and values nature on its own worth. Besides giving intrinsic worth to nature, he takes nature as the source of truth and inspiration for human knowledge and motivations, which has been made clear in the preceding sections. For him, this is possible when one studies nature by dissolving oneself into it. And it is not an unnatural job either. W. Fox confirms: "... say that humans cannot be non-anthropocentric is like saying that a male cannot be nonsexist, or that a white person cannot be nonracist because they can only perceive the world as male or white subjects. ... humans are quite capable of cultivating a non-anthropocentric

consciousness" (21). As shown in the preceding sections, Thoreau not only implies himself to be non-anthropocentric, he also mingles himself into nature to understand it and take lesson for life from it. It shows that Thoreau is far more biocentric or deeper than ecocritics, who concern mainly in giving nature value on its own worth or non-instrumental value.

Harding compares Thoreau and other nature writers like this: "... the most significant difference between Thoreau and other nature writer is that natural history was never his primary interest. It was always a means toward an end. His basic concern was not with nature itself but with man's place in nature" (102). Jonathan Yardley takes *Walden* as the first of ten books that shaped the American character. He claims, "From libertarians to the civil rights marchers, the right wing to the vegetarians, almost every organized (and unorganized) American *ism* has found something to its taste in *Walden*, so wide is the net it casts" (24). Thoreau "has been canonized as natural historian, pioneer ecologist and environmentalist, social activist, anarchistic political theorist, creative artist, and memorable personality combining some or all these roles" (Buell, *Environmental* 315). In his eulogy Emerson presents his impression of Thoreau, "... wherever there is knowledge, wherever there is virtue, wherever there is beauty, he will find a home" ("Thoreau" 95). Such praises show Thoreau's importance and influence in the field of nature and ecocritical writings.

Thoreau can be well treated as an ecocritics. In the matter of treating nature, he goes even deeper than the ecocritics. If ecocritics show human and nature affinities in physical terms, Thoreau shows this even in spiritual terms. Similarly, whereas ecocritics are silent about the sources of truth and human conducts, Thoreau gives whole of his energy to plead human beings to take nature as the source for this. As the base of Thoreau's moral philosophy is nature and as philosophy is one of the

necessary elements for human life, ecocriticism could get some hints from Thoreau to take human being as nature and nature as the source of inspiration.

### **Summary**

Thoreau presents himself in *Walden* as the one who views human life from the prospective of nature. He goes to the Walden Pond to study human and nature relationship. His view in this regard is far more biocentric than that of ecocritics. Like the ecocritics, he does not take human being different from nature. From the observation of nature he finds not only that human being is like nature but also that it should be taken as the source of human motivations. And one could learn this from one's continuous reformation through the intensive observation of nature, even by assimilating oneself into it.

Thoreau goes to the Walden Pond to know human being's place in the universe. He studies human and nature relationship not from the backdrop, but by living in and even absorbing himself into the nature of the Walden Pond. He does not take himself different from the objects of the Walden Pond. He thinks that if he is judged from the human standard, he might be wrong to take himself so, but if he is judged from the standard of the nature, he may not be wrong. For nature, he is no more different from its other species or objects. Thoreau takes nature as immortal. He sees the same nature at the Walden Pond that he had seen long before. Hence, his assimilating himself with the nature of the Walden Pond is his mingling with the eternity.

Thoreau understands that knowing human and nature universal bonds from this process is inevitable for one if one wants to develop natural good moral character and live in harmony. And he is sure that sooner or later people will lead life by studying the footsteps symbolically cast by nature. For him, one can understand truths

about life by studying the symbols of nature, which is possible only when one is absorbed in it as its part, no more as a commander. It is because, as for Emerson, for Thoreau also truths or higher laws suggestively appear in objects of nature. He gives the individual full authority and responsibility for developing and fulfilling moral obligations to others including government institutions.

For Thoreau, a just government is the one which saves individual rights in importing responsibilities to others. However, Thoreau finds democratic governments being just opposite in the name of majority. Thoreau himself becomes one of the victims of the despotic nature of his nations' democratic government, which jailed him on the tiny blame of not paying ignorable tax. In such a situation, Thoreau's alternative is non-violent resistance. His reluctance in paying taxes and glorifying John Brown, the supporter of Black civil rights movement, are his non-violent resistance against his government. From this he hopes that the citizens would be aware not to sanction such a nature of the governments in the days to come.

Ecocritics regard Thoreau as the first saint of ecocriticism. However, there is some difference between him and ecocritics. Whereas ecocritics show human and nature connectivity in physical terms and propose non-anthropocentric conducts towards nature, Thoreau shows both physical and spiritual connectivity between human being and nature and guides people for nature friendly conducts. Similarly, whereas ecocritics do not concern with the sources of human motivations, for Thoreau, nature is the source for it. Thoreau is well convinced that only from the knowledge taken from the study of nature one could fulfill one's responsibility of right conduct, which would guarantee human progress and happiness in a true sense. "Thoreau remains a beacon, and yet we drift farther and farther away from him. None of us now can hope so strenuously to fuse life and work" (Bloom, *Henry* 4). Thoreau

hopes that his posterity could learn about truth and human conducts from the order of nature. In a sense, it is his vision of ecocriticism. Ecocriticism could learn a lot from Thoreau and the transcendentalists in connecting human being with nature more solidly, in finding sources of human motivations and in developing nature friendly human conducts.

Next chapter presents what kind of conducts a person with a sense of natural order or higher law would make in the community. Walt Whitman as a poetic character is the model.



## CHAPTER V

### WHITMAN'S *LEAVES OF GRASS*: LOVE AND FREEDOM IN NATURE

One is likely to speculate what kind of conducts a person who has internalized American transcendental features would cast. Possible conducts of such a person can be known by studying Whitman as a poetic character as presented in *Leaves of Grass*, mainly "Songs of Myself." So have I done in this chapter. In *Leaves of Grass*, Whitman implicitly presents how humans have to pave the way and move. As the first requirement for this, Whitman keeps himself natural. Whitman finds love and freedom as the dominant features of nature. So does he apply these in his life and in his conducts with fellow partners and fellow creatures.

Walt Whitman was not a member of the Transcendental club. But he was deeply moved by American transcendentalism. The features of his writings comply with the features of the movement: "... its [transcendental] basic concepts and values, however, were assimilated by Walt Whitman" (Abrams 327). Whitman's first poetic work is *Leaves of Grass*, of which he saw six editions until his death in 1892. He published his other poetic works like *Calamus*, *Enfans d'Adam*, *A Child's Reminssence*, *When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd*, *Drum Taps*, *Passage to India*. His long poem "Songs of Myself" appeared in 1856. It is one of the representative songs of *Leaves of Grass*. His prose works are like *Democratic Vistas*, and *Specimen Days*. In all of his work, Whitman enjoys his free and loving soul.

Whitman's sense of love and freedom can be discerned from the very first poem, "One's-Self I Sing," of *Leaves of Grass*. Whitman declares that he will sing about passion, pulse, power, cheerfulness, and original actions that are made by the modern man under divine laws: "Of Life immense in passion, pulse, and power,/ Cheerful, for freest action form'd under the laws divine,/ The Modern Man I sing" (7-

9). His divine law is the law of nature. The very beginning lines of his "Songs of Myself " also present how Whitman takes himself and how his relation with nature is. Though the title indicates that the poem is about the poet himself, the poet makes it clear within first few lines of the poem that it is about the whole of human beings, he is just their representative. He announces:

I celebrate myself, and sing myself,  
And what I assume you shall assume,  
For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you.

I loafe and invite my soul,  
I lean and loafe at my ease observing a spear of summer grass.

My tongue, every atom of my blood, form'd from this soil, this air,

.....

I, now thirty-seven years old in perfect health begin,  
Hoping to cease not till death.

.....

I harbor for good or bad, I permit to speak at every hazard,

Nature without check with original energy. ("Song of Myself" 1-13)

Celebrating himself is, in his innate poetic mould, closely linked with ourselves:

“every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you.” Whitman shows that the poem is about human beings because same kind of atoms flow from every one and hence most of their feelings are similar. The source of the poet's inspiration is soul that is embedded in nature. Whitman has made his identity spiritual: “I need no assurance, I

am a man who is pre-occupied of his own soul" ("Assurance" 1). So the poet invites soul by coming into contact of nature. He finds himself to be the part of nature as every atom of his body is formed from nature. Thus he plans to speak about nature with his original or natural energy without any check.

One of the objects of Whitman's quest is his self. "One's-Self I sing, a simple separate person," he tells us in the very first line of *Leaves of Grass* (1). This might be one of the reasons of his entitling his longest poem as "Song of Myself". "Song of Myself" is the description of his journey in search of himself and of his country. The poem is the result of his identification with his country. It records the poet's gradual discovery of America. As he warns us in "Song of Myself," he is both a cosmos and an American: "Walt Whitman, a Kosmos, of Manhattan the son" (497). These show that Whitman takes himself as the carrier of love and freedom, some features of nature or cosmos.

"Song of Myself" has been celebrated as one of the representative poems of *Leaves of Grass* and as a radically original poem of Whitman. It is the poem for which Whitman is best known. It is the continuation of Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* and *Democratic Vistas*. Laurie A. Sterling and Frank D. Casale claim that "Song of Myself" is the continuation of his *Leaves of Grass* which "was meant to be a poetic revolution" in his poetry (38). According to them, "Song of Myself" "includes almost every poetic innovation, theme and subject to be found in *Leaves of Grass*". For them, "Song of Myself" is "at the heart of the vast body of Whitman's poetry" (59). The poem exemplifies the core themes and innovations of Whitman's art. It also illustrates many of the changes and developments in Whitman's poetry that took place over the course of his career. In it Whitman presents himself completely different from his predecessors as an effort to break American literature from the traditions.

Though Emerson is the first person to express the need for America to have distinct forms of literature and philosophy, credit of truly acquiring this goes to Whitman. Whitman does so by breaking from the elite tradition of the past. Sterling and Casale claim, "Indeed, it is hard to imagine "Song of Myself" if Whitman had not been successful in breaking with tradition" (26). Whitman finds even Emerson's poetics, as practiced by many of the transcendentalists including Thoreau, to be too elite. So he seeks a middle ground between high art and popular culture to break American legacy with elite European tradition and romanticism. As the declaration of independence itself had not been so long, America herself was a break from tradition and hence something new. The freedom America gave is reflected in the character of Whitman and in his poetry. His poetry reflects the conditions of modern American life: their language, their aspiration for democracy, their culture, their sense of identity, their environment. Whitman believes that a poet must represent his time and world in his poetry. With the representation of modern American world, he establishes himself not only as one of the most original American poets but also as a nationalist one.

Aspired from American transcendentalism, Whitman takes himself as the divine soul. He does not make any difference between himself and his fellow partners and even with the fellow creatures. As in nature, he projects aspirations of love and freedom in his relations with his fellow partners. Free soul becomes his mode of life. He presents his free and loving prospects in his poetry as the representation of the aspirations of modern democratic America that could be a guideline to the generations to come. He believes that America should truly be the land of democracy and freedom. His free and loving conducts could certainly be a model to his fellow Americans for this. It could also be a model of the nature centered mode of life.

In the sections below, I have first shown that Whitman is a nature oriented or a natural man. Then I have observed the kind of behavioral traits he reflects in his work. As a man of nature, reflection of love and freedom are found in his character.

### **Nature as the Source of Inspiration**

Like Emerson and Thoreau, Whitman takes human being as a part of nature and nature as a source of inspiration. He believes that truth or originality is there only in nature. He takes this originality as God or soul. He feels that the whole world including human being is guided by the same original force. And hence he views that for acquiring original knowledge one should rely only on nature, not on the second hand sources of what people have said or written.

Whitman's desire to take nature as the source of inspiration can be well discerned in his various poems. For instance, in the poem "On Journey through the States" the poet asks to take nature as the source of guidance: "We have watch'd the seasons dispensing themselves and passing on/ And have said, Why should not a man or woman do as much as the season, and effuse as much?" (5-6). The poet proposes not only to learn from nature but also to immerse in it. The poet starts the poem "Song of Myself" by expressing his desire to come to the contact of nature. He believes that when he comes to the contact of nature, his song will rise from the bed of nature and reach the sun, the higher nature or the supplier of nature. In "Song of Myself" he asserts thus:

The smoke of my breath,

Echoes, ripples, buzz'd whispers, love-root, silk-thread, crotch and  
vine,

My respiration and inspiration, the beating of my heart, the passing of  
blood and air through my lungs,

The sniff of green leaves and dry leaves, and of the shore and dark-  
 color'd sea-rocks, and of hay in the barn,  
 The sound of the belch'd words of my voice loos'd to the eddies of the  
 wind,  
 A few light kisses, a few embraces, a reaching around of arms,  
 The play of shine and shade on the trees as the supple boughs wag,  
 The delight alone or in the rush of the streets, or along the fields and  
 hill-sides,  
 The feeling of health, the full-noon trill, the song of me rising from bed  
 and meeting the sun. (21-29)

In these lines Whitman expresses his attachment and dependence on nature. He keeps his breath, his blood and beating of heart, his love, sniff of leaves, sea shore and rocks, hay, his voice, the wind, his kisses, his walks, and his feelings into one string. It indicates that he does not take himself different from nature. John Muir presents his feelings, "I only went out for a walk, and finally concluded to stay out till sundown, for going out, I found, was really going in" (qtd. in Slovic 351). Like Muir, Whitman shows that human being is not only dependent on nature but it is also the source of inspiration.

It becomes further clear from Whitman's approach to animals or other creatures. He appears to have taken non-anthropocentric stand regarding human and nature or animal relationship. The poet says that he could easily turn to be an animal and live with them. It is because they accept their condition however it is, do not weep for their sins, do not discuss about their duty to God. Neither they seek for owing things nor do they kneel to others. Neither they are respectable nor unhappy over the whole earth. He declares:

I think I could turn and live with animals, they are so placid and self  
contain'd,

I stand and look at them long and long.

They do not sweat and whine about their condition,

They do not lie awake in the dark and weep for their sins,

They do not make me sick discussing their duty to God,

Not one is dissatisfied, not one is demented with the mania of owing  
things,

Not one kneels to another, nor to his kind that lived thousands of years  
ago,

Not one is respectable or unhappy over the whole earth.

So they show their relations to me and I accept them,

They bring me tokens of myself, they evince them plainly in their  
possession. ("Song of Myself" 684-93)

The poet praises the features of animals because he feels that he also has or should have these. The poet wonders how the animals got such features. He ponders if humans had also such understanding and negligently dropped them: "I wonder where they get those tokens,/ Did I pass that way huge times ago and negligently drop them?" ("Song of Myself" 694-95). These show that Whitman has no any superiority feeling towards animals. This is similar to the view of Charles Darwin who proved that there is no any evidence for man being superior to other organisms (Manes 22). Whitman gives intrinsic value to nature.

Whitman, therefore, advises the readers not to rely on second knowledge. Neither should they believe on how the dead showed or fed themselves from the books nor should they rely on them. Instead, they should listen to all sides and filter them from their own reasoning. Whitman claims:

All truths wait in all things,  
 They neither hasten their own delivery nor resist it,  
 They do not need the obstetric forceps of the surgeon,  
 The insignificant is as big to me as any,  
 (What is less or more than a touch?)

Logic and sermons never convince,  
 The damp of the night drives deeper into my soul.

("Song of Myself" 648-54)

For Whitman, things themselves are the expressions of truth. They do not have to deliver about themselves. Nor do they need explanations from others about them. Therefore, he says that logics and sermons can never convince one. What one can do about truth is just feel it. Whitman therefore feels that knowing a leaf of grass is as difficult as the journey to the stars, an ant is equally perfect as a man, and the running blackberry equally adorns the parlors of earth heaven as others do.

Whitman believes that his poetry, emerged out of the contact to the core of nature, will teach about the originality of heaven or soul or of higher natural qualities. According to Frederick Turner, Americans understand culture as technology, more frequently the opposite of nature. But he does not agree with this notion of culture. He opines, "If nature, in our myth, is eternal, unchanging, pure, gentle, wise, innocent, balanced, harmonious, and good, then culture (*qua* technology) must be temporary,



progressive, polluting, violent, blind, sophisticated, distorted, destructive, and evil" (45). Similarly, according to Howarth, "All writers and their critics are stuck with language, and although we cast *nature* and *culture* as opposites, in fact they constantly mingle, like water and soil in a flowing stream" (69). Like Turner and Howarth, for Whitman, the remedy to save culture is to lead life by taking nature as the source of inspiration or motivation. His submission to nature for this can be understood also from how he ends his journey of life: "*Farewell my brothern,/ Farewell O earth and sky, farewell ye neighboring waters,/ My time has ended, my term has come*" ("Song of the Redwood-Tree" 6-8). By taking himself as the part of nature, and by taking nature as the source of motivation, he ends his journey by farewelling nature. He does so because he has a sense of being a part of nature, a biocentric practice.

Let me make the way of learning from nature further clear by citing from Thich Nath Hanh's story about Gautam Buddha's teachings. In the story "Sariputta's Roar," Sariputta is retelling to Buddha what the latter had taught Rahula fourteen years before:

Lord, I have practiced to be more like water. Whether someone pours fragrant substance or defiled substances into water, the water receives them both without grasping or aversion. Water is immersed and flowing and has the capacity to transform and purify. Respected Buddha, I have contemplated to make my body and mind more like water. (Hanh 419)

From the teachings of Buddha, Sariputta has become as receptive and purifying as water. Sariputta also tells Buddha how he takes lessons from other objects or elements of nature like earth, fire, air, and so on. Buddha made all of his conclusions out of his

deep feelings and contemplative verifications of the symbolical or spiritual significance of the objects of nature.

In sum, as the believer on nature as the source of inspiration, Whitman does not believe on what other wrote or said. For him, only nature is the source of inspiration. Thus he presents about human relation with nature from his own experience of nature. Following section states how Whitman as a believer in nature for the source of human motivations presents himself.

### **Whitman in Natural State**

Whitman's natural state can be known from how he presents himself. He takes himself as the part of nature. The reason behind this is that one lives by having food that is produced from the soil and the same kind of earthly energy flows in and outside of one's body. From such a world view, it becomes easier for Whitman to effuse himself into nature. He does so and conducts with his fellow partners and creatures accordingly. He does not see himself different from his fellow partners and even from animals.

Like other American transcendentalists, Whitman knows very well that there is one element called "spirit" or "soul" amidst the parts of nature. And this very element is the sole force that moves the whole world. Thus the poet invites his soul by "observing a spear of summer grass" ("Song of Myself" 5). He does so because as he finds his body inter-connected with nature so does he find with his soul. He promises to speak with his "original energy," the soul –the core of nature –so that nature should appear in what he says: "I harbor for good or bad, I permit to speak at every hazard,/ Nature without check with original energy" ("Song Myself" 12-13). He does not care whether it will be good or bad because he believes that original energy is always good as it is or related to the soul. It shows that Whitman as the poet is in his natural state,

in which one applies features of nature in one's everyday life. It is similar to the *Vedantic* view which is a way of finding the world in the self.

Curiosity might arise, what approach about human life such a natural person like Whitman as the poetic persona would make and cast. Like Emerson and Thoreau and in fact like the ecocritics, Whitman takes human life as the product of nature, not that of God. And hence a person is no more different from nature for him. The poet says that he is made of soil: "My tongue, every atom of my blood, form'd from this soil, this air,/ Born here of parents born here from parents the same, and their parents the same" ("Song of Myself" 6-7). The poet takes himself as the product of soil because he lives by having the things produced from soil, which is a part of nature.

As Whitman as the poetic character knows that he is the product of nature, he expresses his intense desire to be nature itself in the following lines:

The atmosphere is not a perfume, it has no taste of the distillation, it is  
odorless,

It is for my mouth forever, I am in love with it,

I will go to the bank by the wood and become undisguised and naked,

I am mad for it to be in contact with me. ("Song of Myself" 17-20)

The poet says that he is depended on nature for his survival. And hence he is in love with it. He wants to be just like nature "undistinguished." He is mad for such a contact. He feels so because he is in his natural state.

Whitman dedicates the whole poem "We Two, How Long We Were Fool'd" to express his realization that he is no more but nature :

We two, how long we were fool'd,

We are Nature, long have we been absent, but now we return,

We become plants, trunks, foliage, roots, bark,

We are what the atmosphere is, transparent, receptive, pervious,  
impervious,

We are snow, rain, cold, darkness, we are each product and influence  
of the globe,

We are circled and circled till we have arrived home again, we two,

We have voided all but freedom and all but our joy. (1-19),

Whitman has not made it clear who another part of the two is. The poet as a male part, another may be female part. Whitman as the speaker thinks that they were fools to assume different from nature. Taking themselves as part of nature he takes as returning home. In this journey home, he has lost everything but his freedom and joy. Now he has realized that real freedom and joy can be gained only after effusing with nature.

Whitman's belief of human affinity with nature can be known also from his answers of a simple question asked by a girl: "*What is the grass?*" (99). The poet cannot give any definite answer what actually the grass is:

A child said *what is the grass?* Fetching it to me with full hands;  
How could I answer the child? I do not know what it is any more than  
he.

I guess it must be the flag of my disposition, out of hopeful green stuff  
woven.

Or I guess it is the handkerchief of the lord,  
A scented gift and remembrance designedly dropt,

Bearing the owner's name someway in the corners, that we may see  
and remark, and say *whose?*

Or I guess the grass is itself a child, the produced babe of the  
vegetation. ("Song of Myself " 99-105)

The poet replies to the questioner that the grass might be the symbol of his disposition. Or it might be the handkerchief of the lord designedly dropt indicating humans to find his owner and there by reach God. Or it might even be the child herself as she is grown out of vegetation. Asselineau finds that "Whitman never provides us with ready-made answers, but invites us to follow him in his quest and even go beyond him if we can" (19). Whitman only hints the fact that it might be a thread that links a person to the creator or what he calls as soul or God. This shows that Whitman takes grass as the representative of nature no more different from human being or God. Whitman's rendering human being into nature in this way is also an example of his perfect biocentric practice. Relating the self to the world of experience is central to the comprehensive intent of Whitman's poems. It is similar to the *Vedantic* view which is a way of embracing the other –the objective world –in an all-inclusive conception of self.

To summarize, as Whitman views human being not different from nature, he takes himself as the part of nature. He presents his feelings arisen by mingling himself into nature. Whitman's almost religious celebration to the common elements of nature suggests that all nature is endowed with an essentially divine quality. His refusal to value one over the rest indicates the unity of all creation. His ongoing desire to merge with other beings is thematically analogous to a religious impulse to be at one with

the divine embedded in nature. He has such an impulse because he is in his natural state.

Question arises, what kind of conducts such a person would make towards his fellow partners. Following sections present some basic features that a natural person could project. Model for this is Whitman himself as the poetic character reflected in *Leaves of Grass*.

### **Whitman's Love of Humanity**

One of the features that are found in the character of Whitman as a natural person is his love of humanity. This can be known by observing his conducts as reflected in *The Leaves of Grass*, especially in "Songs of Myself," his representative poem. Whitman's songs indicate that he writes songs of "commonplace" involving within it and feeling that "every hour of light and dark is a miracle" ("Song of Myself" 22). Whitman as the poetic persona presents himself being attached in what he says and does not project himself as the commander of the common people but as their helper, as the singer of their problems. The reason behind this is that he does not feel himself different from them. He feels that their problems are his problems and their joys are his joys too.

Whitman projects deep love for people. As he believes in the inter-connectivity in all living and non-living things of the earth both physically and spiritually, he does not take himself different from other fellow partners. Like other transcendentalists, he takes soul as the force that unites people into oneness. Whitman thinks that clear and sweet is his soul and so is that of others. If his soul feels something lack, so is the case with others' soul as all soul is one:

Clear and sweet is my soul, and clear and sweet is all that is not my  
soul.

Lack one lacks both, and the unseen is proved by the seen,  
Till that becomes unseen and receives proof in its turn.

Showing the best and dividing it from the worst age vexes age,  
Knowing the perfect fitness and equanimity of things, while they  
discuss I am silent, and go bathe and admire myself. ("Song of  
Myself" 52-56)

The poet believes that every age shows something best. He thinks that anything best is the matter of feeling, not of discussion. So he does not want to take part in the futile job of discussion. He says, "I believe in you my soul, the other I am must not abase itself to you,/ And you must not be abased to the other" ("Song of Myself" 82-83). His feeling of the best of his soul and equally respecting others soul is his realization of the universality of soul.

Whitman presents himself as an uneducated but inspired carpenter. Asselineau calls Whitman as "the athlete." For him, Whitman "was indeed the moral athlete who throughout his life victoriously fought against despair" (21). This does not mean that Whitman as the poet deceives the readers by trying to guide towards him by any means. Instead, what he does is that he simply presents what he experiences. The poet exerts:

I am the poet of the Body and I am the poet of the Soul,  
The pleasures of heaven are with me and the pains of hell are with me,  
The first I graft and increase upon myself, the latter I translate into a  
new tongue.

I am the poet of the woman the same as the man,  
 And I say it is as great to be a woman as to be a man,  
 And I say there is nothing greater than the mother of men. ("Song of  
 Myself" 422-27)

The poet takes himself as the poet of both body and soul. And he does not write about these in fancy but out of his experience of both good and bad. Furthermore, he writes not only about men but also about women. He praises women for being mothers. It is the poet's regard to women for continuing the human generation.

Whitman internalizes all in him and takes himself as the mouthpiece of all. "Camerado", the poet warns us in "So Long!" "this is not a book,/ Who touches this touches a man" (53-54). In the poem "A Leaf for Hand in Hand," he infuses himself with all no matter old or young, mechanics or street boys: "You friendly boatmen and mechanics! you roughs!/ You twain! And all processions moving along the streets!/ I wish to infuse myself among you till I see it common for you to walk hand in hand" (4-6). Thus whatever is done to others, the poet feels to have been done to himself:

Whoever degrades another degrades me,  
 And Whatever is done or said returns at last to me.

Through me the afflatus surging and surging, through me the current  
 and index.

I speak the pass-word primeval, I give the sign of democracy,  
 By God! I will accept nothing which all cannot have their counterpart  
 of on the same terms.



Through me many long dumb voices,  
 Voices of the interminable generations of prisoners and slave,  
 Voices of the diseas'd and despairing and of thieves and dwarfs,  
  
 Voices of cycles of preparation and accretion,  
 And of the threads that connect the stars, and of wombs and of the  
     father-stuff,  
 And of the rights of them the others are down upon,  
 On the deform'd, trivial, flat, foolish, despised,  
 Fog in the air, beetles rolling balls of dung.

Through me forbidden voices,  
 Voices of sexes and lusts, voices veil'd and I remove the evil,  
 Voices indecent by me clarified and transfigur'd. ("Song of Myself"  
 503-18)

If the poet sees someone degrading another, he feels himself to have been degraded too. It is because he thinks that the same as their divine spirit or soul flows from him as well. He gives the sign of democracy by speaking the primeval words, which flow equally in others as well. So his voice will be the voices of prisoners and slaves, of the diseased and despairing, of thieves and dwarfs, of wombs and father stuff, and of those whose rights have been snatched. From him flow the forbidden voices of sexes and lusts and suppressed and of those who are unable to express, which he clarifies and transfigures to good ones.



give him or her knowledge of philosophy. He will not lead one to a dinner table, library or stock exchange. Instead he will lead them to a hill or landscape. This will be a journey to nature to which one has to travel oneself. "Perhaps you have been on it since you were born and did not know,/ Perhaps it is everywhere on water and on land" ("Song of Myself" 1213-14). The poet thinks that such a journey should be taken by taking help one another.

Whitman presents himself as a helper to others because he believes that it is love which binds all things together and brings about the sense of oneness. God himself is love and the whole world is a manifestation of it. How vital love or cosmic sympathy is to the unity, integrity and oneness of the universe is expressed by Whitman in a memorable line: "And whoever walks a furlong without sympathy walks to his own funeral drest in his shroud" ("Songs of Myself" 1272). The poet's love overflows and fills the world like the love of Buddha who, in the words of Swami Vivekananda, "... sent a thought of love towards the south, the north, the east, and the west, above and below, until the whole universe was filled with this love, grand, great and infinite" (*Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* 321).

As a follower of American transcendentalism, Whitman spiritualizes human beings. He takes himself, both inside and outside, as divine. He thinks that his head is more than Churches, Bibles and all the creeds. It might be because freshness of nature instead of old creeds is seated in the purely natural mind:

Divine am I inside and out, and I make holy whatever I touch or am  
touche'd from,

The scent of these arm-pits aroma finer than prayer,

This head more than churches, bibles, and all the creeds.

If I worship one thing more than another it shall be the spread of my  
own body, or any part of it,

Translucent mould of me it shall be you! ("Song of Myself" 524-28)

Whitman thinks that whatever he worships or talks about will be his body or part of body as his body is the growth and form of all other things and vice versa. So he takes other men as himself.

Whitman presents himself as the defender of all people and nation because he has subjugated himself or his soul with the universal soul. This is similar to the Hindu *Vedanta* philosophy, the doctrine of oneness and unity of all things which are filled with the same divine spirit. Such an expanded soul destroys all dualism and refuses to recognize a plural world. By cosmic embrace it brings together all things and finds as what Vivekananda finds: "One life, One world, One existence" (295). There may be difference in degree, but not in kind. In the spiritual democracy brought into existence by Whitman's vision of the self pervading the universe, there is no distinction between the animal and human existence, between things animate and inanimate. It is with such self, rich in metaphysical meaning and significance that Whitman concerns in his poetry.

As Whitman knows the oneness of soul, he gives it the attribution of God. And hence he takes all humans as his brothers and all women as his sisters and lovers:

Swiftly arose and spread around me the peace and knowledge that pass  
all the argument of the earth,

And I know that the hand of God is the promise of my own,

And I know that the spirit of God is the brother of my own,

And that all the men ever born are also my brothers, and the women  
my sisters and lovers. ("Song of Myself" 91-94)

What peace the poet's body or soul feels and what knowledge he gets from it is his knowledge of truth. No other argument can upset it. What he does or speaks is the hand of God as it is God that lives in him and that orders him to do things. If God lives in the natural man like him, he lives in all natural men too. So the poet takes all men and women as divine.

The union between soul and body leads to spiritual illumination. For Whitman everything merges in the self and the merging is the point at which knowledge reaches through self, becomes self, and returns to self. Since all merge in self, and self underlies all, and the poet merges through self into all, the poet of “Song of Myself” sings:

The sharp-hoof'd moose of the north, the cat on the house-still, the  
    chickadee, the prairie-dog,  
 The litter of the grunting sow as they tug at her teats,  
 The brood of the turkey-hen and she with her half-spread wings,  
 I see in them and myself the same old law. (249-52)

By identifying himself with everything around him, Whitman becomes inclusive. This concept is very similar to Lord Krishna's postulation in *Vagavad Gita* that the seer sees self in all and all in self. As keeping with the spirit of *Vedanta*, Whitman reminds the reader that human is essentially divine, that a person's aim in life is to realize this divine nature. The poet's identification of himself with life around him leads to complete merging with the world.

Whitman merges with the world because he believes in “divine self” or soul in which individuals are given divine attribution. This is where scholars of Oriental thought find Whitman's similarities with Hindu *Vedantic* tradition of “*aham bramasmī*” –I am *Brahman* or universal soul. According to Sankaracharya, *Brahman*

or universal soul is the ultimate reality; the phenomenal world is the result of *maya* or illusion and therefore it has only apparent reality; individual *atman* or soul is not different from *Brahman*. Whitman's "divine self" and Sankaracharya's *Brahman* match in meaning. Thoreau finds Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* "wonderfully like the Oriental." And Whitman himself called "the ancient Hindu poems" as "embryonic facts of *Leaves of Grass*" (Whitman, *Prose Writing of Walt Whitman* 572). This shows the influence of *Vedanta* philosophy on Whitman.

To live in the perfection of some images is one of the natures of spiritual life. As a spiritual practitioner, Moore says, "I've had to learn that my body is the Jesus-body, my life the fire of love rather than the rock of self.... His [Jesus'] way is not one of ultimate tragedy but of divine comedy" (143). Similarly, as the believer in the divine soul in person, Whitman creates image of Jesus in him. Like Jesus, the poet finds himself on the verge of making a usual mistake, the mistake of forgiving or remaining innocent:

Enough! enough! enough!

Somehow I have been stunn'e. Stand back!

Give me a little time beyond my cuff'd head, slumbers, dreams,  
gaping,

I discover myself on the verge of a usual mistake.

That I could forget the mockers and insults!

That I could forget the trickling tears and the blows of the bludgeons  
and hammers!

That I could look with a separate look on my own crucifixion and  
bloody crowning. ("Song of Myself" 959-65)

Though the poet, as an image of Jesus Christ, knows that it is a mistake, he is prepared to follow this by forgiving the mockers and insulters, tricklers and blowers upon him. He could look his own crucifixion. Jesus Christ also did the same. He worshiped God to forgive the ones who crucified him as he thought they were ignorant.

As Whitman takes forgiveness as one of the important features of nature or of a natural person like Jesus, he wants people to follow natural features from the manners of natural Jesus like persons:

Wherever he goes men and women accept and desire him,  
They desire he should like them, touch them, speak to them, stay with  
them.

Behavior lawless as snow-flakes, words simple as grass, uncomb'd  
head, laughter, and naivete,  
Slow-stepping feet, common features, common modes and emanations,  
They descend in new forms from the tips of his fingers,  
They are wafted with the odor of his body or breath, they fly out of the  
glance of his eyes. ("Song of Myself" 981-86)

Such a person's manner would be natural like snow-flakes, words simple as grass, slow steps, common features, common modes and emanations, which are so easy to be applied by any person. People like to keep him with them. From his projection and help, people learn to behave in a new and natural way like him. The poet thinks that evil natured persons cannot come near such a natural person.

Because Whitman connotes individual soul with "divine self" or soul or *Brahma*, he does not take death as the end of life but as a process. For him death is as

important as life. The poet compares life and death with hat and boots. As both hat and boots are equally good and necessary for a person, so are life and death:

Has any one supposed it lucky to be born?

I hasten to inform him or her it is just as lucky to die, and i know it.

I pass death with the dying and birth with the new-wash'd babe, and

am not contain'd between my hat and boots,

And peruse manifold objects, no two alike and every one good,

The earth good and the stars good, and their adjuncts all good. ("Song of Myself" 131-35)

Whitman believes that nothing of the earth collapses —only their forms are changed.

So for him, to die is to be luckier —a service in the process of the earth. Asselineau

explains Whitman's such a notion like this: "Thus, according to him, the same

irresistible current of life flows through the whole cosmos, through the smallest and

humblest herbaceous plants, through the animals which feed upon them, and once

more through the anonymous grass which grows on their corpses when they die" (22).

Whitman's concept of death is like the Hindu concept of *Punarjanma* or reincarnation

in which death is like changing of old cloth of soul seated in human body. In another

sense, he seems to be voicing the Hindu doctrine of *Karma*. He implies that the gross

body, which is unreal, dies and it is buried. The real body, that is the soul, is

immaterial, intangible, and unsubstantial and hence it transforms or reincarnates.

Whitman takes other peoples' problems as his problems and tries to solve

them as far as possible. He does so because he takes himself not different from them.

It is natural that he cannot offer them material help, nor does he teach them any

philosophy. Instead, he guides them to be as natural as possible, from which one

learns to lead simple, laborious and peaceful life. Whitman's such a behavior



indicates that he is a lover of humanity. And he practices so because he finds love in nature. Love and cooperation like this is also one of the biocentric features. According to Murray Bookchin, nature is not the violent struggle for survival of the fittest. Instead, it is a cooperative place, a model for human society (Dryzek 209). Whitman wants to lead a simple life from which everyone may feel happy and may like to imitate. One can easily assume that such a person is likely to possess high sense of freedom.

### **Whitman's Love of Freedom**

Another important feature that is seen in the character of Whitman as a poet is his love of freedom. As a man in natural state, Whitman applies freedom in his character because he finds so in the law of nature. As he finds freedom one of the important elements of nature, he takes nature as a guide for this. He takes himself as the representative of freedom and America as its savior. So he uses democracy and America as the convertible terms.

"Song of Myself" is the continuation of Whitman's love of equality and freedom expressed in *Leaves of Grass*. Whitman's effort in *Leaves of Grass* is to invent poetry as open, as nondiscriminatory, and as absorptive as he imagined an ideal democracy would be. He tries to construct a democratic voice that would serve as a model for his society. It is the expression of his passionate attachment to the fundamental democratic principles like liberty, equality, fraternity:

In all people I see myself, none more and not one a barely-corn less ...

O such themes –equalities! O divine average! ...

All is eligible to all,

All is for individuals, all is for you. (qtd. in Asselineau 26)

As Whitman gives high value to freedom and equality, in "To a Foil'd European Revolutionaire" he encourages the freedom fighters to get liberty at any cost: "Courage yet, my brother or sister!/ Keep on –Liberty is to be subserv'd whatever occurs;/ That is nothing that is quell'd by one or two failures, or any number of failures," (1-3). Whitman pleads for equal opportunities to all because he does not see others different from himself. His ambition is not only to sing his self, his doubts, and his hopes, but also to utter the word 'democracy.' Thus he pleads for freedom so that individuals would be able to develop their individual qualities.

The hero of the tiny modern epic, "Song of Myself," which represents the contemporary world of Whitman's time, is "Myself", not a personal but a universal figure corresponding to all people. In a way, "Myself" is everyone: "And what I assume you shall assume,/ For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you" ("Song of Myself" 2-3). For Whitman, "the audience is a community, and his concern with community reflects a broader thematic interest in American democracy and pluralism" (Casale 87). As "Myself" represents everyone, the "Song of Myself" can be taken as the analogy of the United States herself.

Whitman as the speaker of "Song of Myself" says that he exists as he is, this is enough for him and is satisfied: "If no other in the world be aware I sit content,/ And if each and all be aware I sit content" (413-15). Mack writes, "Whitman's democratic vision moves from one assuming uncritical faith in laissez-faire to one increasingly reliant upon the enlightened work of a democratic nation" (xx-xxi). Whitman behaves without disturbing others' business. He accepts the flow of reality. He says, "I accept Reality and dare not question it./ Materialism first and last imbuing" ("Song of Myself" 83-84). He complies with materialism because freedom is its foundation.

Whitman's treatment of equality and freedom can be known from the poet's narration of an event in which he brings a sick runaway slave to his home, provides him food, shelter and cloth and dines with him on the same table. He would invite like this to others as well:

I will not have a single person slighted or left away,  
The kept-woman, sponger, thief, are hereby invited,  
The heavy-lipp'd slave is invited, the venerealee is invited;  
There shall be no difference between them and the rest. ("Song of  
Myself" 374-77)

The poet would invite even to the heavy lipped slaves. He does not make any difference between such slaves and others. This is Whitman's strong sympathy to the Black slaves who were fighting for freedom in his time. He does so out of his humanity. So he exposes, "I am not the poet of goodness only, I do not decline to be the poet of wickedness also" ("Song of Myself" 463). He further says "I do not call one greater and one smaller,/ That which fills its period and place is equal to any" ("Song of Myself" 1142-43). He extends rights to women as well as men, proclaiming, for instance: "I launch all men and women forward with me into the Unknown" ("Song of Myself" 1136). He knows that Americans have richness and variety by birth and there will be so in the days to come.

Whitman identifies himself not only with multitude but also with good and bad: "Not a mutineer walks handcuff'd to jail but I am handcuff'd to him and walk by his side" ("Songs of Myself" 951). For him good and evil are interdependent. In fact, *dharma* (good) is dependent upon *adharma* (evil) for its existence. If the poet sings with equanimity of the joys and sorrows of life, it is because of his experience that has made him transcend good and evil. Whitman has a prominent streak of realism, and

he celebrates with great joy the beauty and charm of the visible world. For him, the objective world has a concrete reality. Whitman, like a *Vedantist*, is an idealist who believes that the world is real, but has no independent existence apart from the higher reality, that is, *Brahman*.

As a man who sees physical and spiritual realities combined, Whitman, in "Songs of Myself," and in *Democratic Vistas*, treats religious, social, political and artistic topics with immediate reference to the present. For him only present is important. In "Song of Myself" the speaker says:

... I do not talk of the begi`nning or the end.

There was never any more inception than there is now,  
Nor any more youth or age than there is now,  
And will never be any more perfection than there is now,  
Nor any more heaven or hell than there is now. (39-43)

For the poet, if there is heaven and hell at all it is only in the present, not beyond. So, one has to get perfection now: how one tackles with the present so one gets heaven or hell then. Thus the poet pleads: "Urge and urge and urge,/ Always the procreant of the world" ("Song of Myself" 44-45). What one has to do is to understand present need of the world and do accordingly. This belief in the present makes Whitman as the modern poet who represents his contemporary world.

Whitman thinks that the form of democracy he sees is the result of centuries' progress. He takes democracy not a fixed structure, but a process of refinements. In *Democratic Vistas* he opines:

The old men, I remember as a boy, were always talking of American  
Independence. What is independence? Freedom from all laws or bonds

except those of one's own being, controlled by the universal ones. To lands, to man, to woman, what is there at last to each, but the inherent soul, nativity, idiocracy, free, highest-poised, soaring its own flight, following out itself? (57)

Whitman does not take the Declaration of Independence as the warrant of freedom. For him freedom means to be free from all other bonds except that of personal being that is controlled by the universal soul. He believes that only then one could explore one's being and take the real pleasure of freedom.

Whitman views democracy as a comprehensive description of human society and culture, analogous to the fundamental forces of nature. For him, Democracy is all material and at the same time all spiritual. Mack describes Whitman's view of democracy like this:

Democracy is the warrant nature gives for human freedom as well as the protocol it establishes for disciplined living. It both describes the universe as it actually is and prescribes the process that can make it so. Democracy is the very way we imagine our relations to one another and to the material and spiritual world in which we live. It is not a single aspect of a larger organic vision; it is the organism itself and the quality of relations that binds it together. (xvii)

Whitman constructs a cosmological warrant for democratic freedom –a system that we find in nature. So he offers us to learn democratic principles from nature. He "believed that democratic values such as individual liberty and self-governance and democratic processes such as collective decision-making are not just aspects of political life but also manifestations of principles that operate throughout the cosmos" (Mack xvii). Whitman understands the self as fundamentally material and social. And

hence, the application of democratic principles in life would create harmony not only in our relations with other men but also with the material and spiritual world.

Whitman links loving his country as loving democracy. For him, the issue is always the negotiation of the "democratic individual" with "democratic nationality" (*Democratic Vista* xx). For him, "American patriotism meant identifying oneself emotionally and intellectually with classic American democratic values and ideals" (Mack xiii). He takes America as the "Centre of equal daughters, and equal sons," ("America" 1). The poet himself puts it in *Democratic Vistas*: "I shall use the words America and Democracy as convertible terms" (4). Thus Loyalty to America is a loyalty to an American utopian democratic creed –a "civic religion," as Whitman calls it: "O America because you build for mankind I build for you ("By Blue Ontario's Shore" 115). There is civic religion behind Whitman's patriotism. The essence of this civic religion, the real object of his patriotism, is his own far-reaching vision of democracy. Whitman's particular kind of nationalism is attractive because it focuses on forms of responsibility to other persons while also emphasizing significant ways of pursuing selves we can become.

However, democracy remained just an ideal goal, never a realized practice, for Whitman. *Democratic Vistas* stands as Whitman's "most eloquent and extended articulation of the hazy, beckoning, illusive American democratic future" (Folsom xxi). In *Democratic Vistas* Whitman laments, "It is as if we were somehow being endowed with a vast and more and more thoroughly-appointed body, and then left with little or no soul" (12). He further puts, "We have frequently printed the word Democracy," he says, "yet I cannot too often repeat that it is a word the real gist of which still sleeps, quite unawaken'd" and he goes on to say that it is a "great word, whose history I suppose, remains unwritten, because that history has yet to be

enacted" (*Democratic Vistas* xvii). Democracy, in other words, is the most significant word in the American language and yet remains a word for which there is still no definition, because no society has yet lived the history that would illustrate it. Reality often disappointed him and made him despair of ever seeing his ideal come true. He always thought that democracy is "the destin'd conqueror," and her "spreading mantle would one day cover the world," as he boldly prophesied in "By Blue Ontario's Shore" (qtd. in Asselineau 26). Whitman saw democracy as an inevitable evolutionary force in human history, and he did all he could to urge the evolution along, but he was under no illusion that a functioning democratic society would come easily or quickly.

For Whitman, unless everyone applies conscience, real democracy cannot be achieved. In *Democratic Vistas* he opines: "I say there is nothing else higher, for Nation, Individual, or for Literature, than the idea, and practical realization and expression of the idea, of Conscience, kept at topmost mark, absolute in itself, well cultivated, uncontaminated by the manifold weeds, the cheats, changes, and vulgarities of the fashions of the world" (62). He further says, "And lo! to the consciousness of the soul, the permanent Identity, the thought, the something, before which the magnitude even of Democracy, Art, Literature, &c., dwindles, becomes partial, measurable –something that fully satisfies, (which those do not)" (68). To develop conscience, Whitman advises the reader to know the place of soul that is seated in everyone.

To experience democratic selfhood, in Whitman's view, an American needs to know how he or she could share an identity with every member of the society. "He or she was also needed to learn to love difference by recognizing the possibility of that difference within a multitudinous self" (Folsom xx-xxi). Such people would have been enlarged by nondiscriminatory practice, nurtured by a new absorptive and anti-

feudalistic literature, and enriched by love that crossed conventional boundaries.

According to Asselineau, Whitman was a “a true democrat, in short, with a deeply ingrained faith in the possibility of earthly happiness for all men ...” (18). Similarly, according to Folsom, “*Democratic Vistas* still offers today's reader the opportunity to argue with Whitman over the nature of democracy and the future of the nation” (lxiv). Whitman can be taken as the theorist of the democratic sublime in the contemporary political theory. He is a true democrat. He is perhaps the greatest philosopher of the culture of democracy.

In sum, as a man with natural qualities, Whitman loves freedom because it is there in nature. He pleads for freedom for all people, no matter women or blacks. Along with it, he pleads also for equality in opportunities. He takes himself as the representative of democracy and America as its savior. He is a lover of freedom because he finds it to be one of the biocentric features of nature and human beings. He understands democracy in its progressive form, not in the complete form, which has still to be achieved. No matter in implied way, freedom and love are the concerns of ecocriticism too.

### **Love and Freedom from Ecocritical Perspective**

Ecocriticism does not appear to have immediate concern for human love and freedom. Its main focus is to stop environmental degradation. Love and freedom might be its by products. In this regard, Whitman appears to be deeper than the ecocritics. Like ecocritics he views man as the part of nature. More than the ecocritics, he finds soul in nature and takes it as the source of inspiration for human motivations. And as he finds love and freedom as the features of nature, he pleads to apply these in human conducts.



Ecocriticism does not comply with both strong and weak anthropocentric stands because these give privilege to human beings one way or other for controlling nature. Ecocentrists do not cope with any element where there is even a single sense of human superiority over nature. Their primary concern is to motivate human beings to recognize non-instrumental values of nature. As Ecocriticism concerns in giving justice to nature, human love and freedom do not come under its primary focus. Ecocritics assume that human problems will be solved as the byproduct when non-anthropocentric world view is applied in practical life.

However, some ecocritics use ecocritical notions as the means of fighting for human freedom. For instance, ecofeminists compare themselves with nature to fight against androcentric domination to them. There is a tendency within ecofeminist theory to emphasize the affinities and connection between women and nature. Armbruster takes such a communion between human and non-humans nature as "an important step toward overcoming the dualisms that structure our culture's thinking, relying only on connection can collapse the self/other dualism into an undifferentiated whole" ("A Poststructuralist Approach to Ecofeminist Criticism" 198). Ecofeminists effort to break the dualistic Western philosophy as an effort for women to be treated equally as men.

Like ecocritics, Whitman gives intrinsic worth to nature. And more than the ecocritics, he takes human being as nature. He believes that human being is another form of soil: "My tongue, every atom of my blood, form'd from this soil, this air," ("Song of Myself" 6). The poet praises the self contained nature of animals: "They bring me tokens of myself, they evince them plainly in their possession" ("Song of Myself" 693). From this he learns to be self contained. He says that he could turn to animal and live with them without any hesitation: "I think I could turn and live with

animals, they are so placid and self contain'd,/ I stand and look at them long and long" ("Song of Myself" 684-85). He further says, "I wonder where they get those tokens,/ Did I pass that way huge times ago and negligently drop them" ("Song of Myself" 694-95)? The poet wonders how the animals got such features and if humans had also such features and they negligently dropped them.

Though ecocritics have not developed a theory in which man could develop a sense of love by learning from nature, they have some faint hope that from the non-anthropocentric treatment to nature, humans would develop a sense of love and apply not only in treating nature but also in making conducts with fellow partners. Unlike the ecocritics, Whitman directly expresses his love for humanity. He says that he is the poet of the people who are in trouble. He speaks for them: "Through me many long dumb voices,/ Voices of the interminable generations of prisoners and slave,/ Voices of the diseas'd and despairing and of thieves and dwarfs," ("Song of Myself" 508-10). He asks the deprived ones to shoulder on him.

Similarly, Ecocritics have not developed a theory from which human beings could develop a sense of freedom. But, like other American transcendentalists, Whitman learns sense of individuality or freedom from nature. He views that as the soul of nature is free and omnipotent, human soul is or should also be so too. With his sense of freedom, Whitman keeps himself completely different from the tradition. He is different from his predecessors not only in subject matter but also in form. He pours into his poetry whatever he experiences, feels, or thinks without any second thought. The poet does not concern even if he contradicts. As shown in the preceding entries, Whitman takes democracy as the motto of life. But he remains disillusioned from the leaders as they failed to keep democracy in track. Casale feels of him so too: "Whitman was an earnest and strong believer in the power of democracy, but he grew

disillusioned as politicians were not able to solve the serious issues of the antebellum years and as the nation slid closer to chaos" (43). However, Whitman believes that errors go on being corrected gradually in the free society. What it needs is free say. This is one of the reasons of his free expression. He celebrates not only the sights and sounds of the United States, but its immensity and power. Thus he takes himself as the representative of democracy.

As a whole, ecocritics are more concerned in the need of giving intrinsic or un-instrumental value to nature rather than pleading for natural qualities like love and freedom in human conducts. Unlike the ecocritics, Whitman as a natural man applies love and freedom in his character because he takes human being as the part of nature and finds these as the dominant features of nature. He believes that human development is possible mainly from the application of such natural values in life. Ecocriticism could learn from him in finding natural human values and in building up natural character that is proportionate to nature.

### **Summary**

Like Emerson and Thoreau, Whitman takes himself as a part of nature. And like them nature is the source of inspiration for him. As a result, he projects his natural behavior. Natural features like love and freedom are dominant in his character. But for ecocritics, love and freedom are by products of non-anthropocentric treatment to nature.

Whitman believes that at the core of nature there is soul and this is the very element which guides the whole world. At the very beginning of "Song of Myself," the poet invites the soul so that he could produce his poem from the core of his heart and experiences reflecting universality. Though the title indicates that the poem is about the poet's personal life, Whitman makes it clear at the very beginning that it is

about the whole of human beings. It is because the same atoms of energy flow in all humans, the same soul regulates them and they all are dependent on nature for their survival and motivation.

Thus Whitman views nature as the source of inspiration and truth. The poet as the speaker of "Song of Myself" expresses his strong desire to be nature itself.

Presenting himself as a care free natural man with natural qualities, the speaker shows his loving prospects not only to human beings but also to animals and nature. He not only presents himself as other persons but also as the fellow creatures. He praises animals' carefree and unproblematic life and expresses his feeling that he could easily turn to be animals. He presents himself as the poet of the people who are in trouble. He offers help to such people. He guides them to be relieved from the contact of nature.

From the speaker's viewing nature as the source of truth and also from his taking himself as a part of nature, it can be reasoned that Whitman as a poet is in natural state. And from the poet's love to people and nature and from his defense of freedom, it can be reasoned that love and freedom are some of the elements of nature. From these, it is evident that Whitman is one step ahead of the ecocritics. Whereas the immediate purpose of ecocritics is to fight to provide intrinsic worth to nature, Whitman maintains this and also efforts to develop love and freedom in the conducts of individuals. For Whitman, man has the sense of love and freedom by nature.

Whitman believes that natural features like love and freedom have to be explored for human happiness. And for him, this is possible only in democracy. And hence, not only "Songs of Myself" but whole of his work are meant to show the need of democracy. There was democracy in his country but he was disillusioned from it as it could not fulfill the aspirations of people. However, unlike Thoreau, he does not

come to the revolutionary measures. In this sense, he is closer to Emerson. Like Emerson, he believes that problems are gradually solved. What it needs is only the say. He just presents his experiences and feelings of dissatisfaction and real needs for the country with due care of form or decoration of his expressions. He looks more to the future than to the past. He believes that present has to be modified with a vision for the future. He believes so because in his view absolute democracy has never been materialized. He takes himself as the representative of democracy and America as its savior.

Whitman's vision flows in the direction of Hindu philosophy. Both Western and Indian scholars find striking resemblance between Whitman's poetry and ancient Hindu teachings. Like the Hindu sages, Whitman envisions the self as a source of vision and perception. His vision of the oneness of all things is not a frequent occurrence. He applies this conviction as a persistent theme of his poetry: the "I" of the poet, the transformed self, reaches and embraces all continents, all races, and all religions with their past, present and the future. He celebrates the immanence of the divine principle at work in the universe. There is persistent longing in him to understand the transcendent god-head. Whitman rejects the religion of his fore-fathers and forms a poetic democracy of the spirit based on the twin principles of equalitarianism and oneness of all beings.

In the matter of the treatment of love and freedom, Whitman appears to be ahead of ecocritics. It is because the main concern of ecocritics is to plead for giving intrinsic value to nature whereas Whitman not only gives intrinsic worth to nature but also pleads for love and freedom that are rooted in the features of nature. Ecocritics have not given necessary space for such natural human values as love and freedom. They are also silent how such values are created. As the elements like love and

freedom are necessary for human life, ecocritics could learn from him to detect such natural human qualities from nature and apply them in making their conducts proportionate to nature.

## CHAPTER VI

### HARMONY IN HUMAN BEING AND NATURE

The objective of the research is to know how American transcendentalists treat nature in relation to human beings and to compare how much they match with ecocritical features. The purpose of doing this is to check if ecocriticism could note some hints to further develop itself in the time when its practitioners have the feelings of some difficulties related to theoretical and methodological guidance. The proposition thus is that the major features of American transcendentalism in relation to human and nature relationship are that nature holds universal spirit, that human being is analogous to nature, and that nature is the source of human motivations. And the methodological or philosophical gaps of ecocriticism could be fulfilled by employing and intensifying these.

The proposition has appeared to be correct as conclusion has been drowned with full arguments that ecocriticism could develop itself to a full shaped literary and critical philosophy of the present time by fully internalizing, applying, and intensifying the major features of American transcendentalism regarding human and nature relationship. The study has thus fully achieved the aim. The sections below summarize the study, give the conclusion, supply implications of the study and offer some suggestions for further research.

#### **Human and Nature Relationship in American Transcendentalism and Ecocriticism**

Major focus of American transcendentalists, specially Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman, is to introduce an approach of viewing the world from the perspective of nature. They do it by implicitly showing human and nature interconnected relationships. In this regard, studied three American transcendentalist writers –

Emerson, Thoreau, Whitman –project three different propositions, each with one dominant transcendental feature. Their represented transcendental features are: nature as the representation of spiritual truth; human being not fundamentally different from nature; and nature as the source of human motivations to make conducts proportionate to nature. These features correspond also with ecocriticism to a lesser or higher extent.

American transcendental literature offers a complete philosophic course: what truth is, what human being is and how humans should move. Emerson, finds in nature universal soul, which is truth or God for him, and hence he takes it as a touchstone for human motivations. Thoreau intensifies this by showing that human being is a part of nature and hence their aspirations should cope with the order of nature. And Whitman, as a believer of such a mode of life, detects natural human values like love and freedom from nature and applies them in the conducts of his life.

The theme of nature being the representative of universal spirit is dominant with Emerson as presented in his paramount work *Nature*. Emerson sees universal soul in nature which he takes as truth, eternity, wisdom or God. He believes that every object of nature casts some symbolical meaning of the universal soul. Thus he proposes to take the universal soul as the guidance for human knowledge and motivations. Humans have to detect human nature from the symbolical meanings of the natural objects and mould their conducts accordingly. It is one of the dominant themes of the whole American transcendental movement. This future oriented notion hinted to cut up relation with the past looking religious and Lockean empirical philosophies for the sources of human knowledge and motivations.

Though it is Emerson who hints of human being's interconnected relationship with nature, it is Thoreau who observes it thoroughly. Thoreau studies human being's



relation with nature by staying completely secluded for two years in the nature of the Walden Pond. He presents the findings of his experiment and observations in *Walden*. From his observation he reasons that human being is the part of nature and hence their destiny is imbedded in it. One cannot know this bond by studying nature from the backdrop but by being enmeshed with it. This is what Thoreau does in the forest of the Walden Pond. Thoreau's implicit claim of humans being no more different from nature indirectly becomes another revolutionary theme of American transcendentalism as it is just opposite to the then dominant anthropocentric world view. Ecocritics take him as the innovator of ecocriticism.

Emerson and Thoreau well established the notion that humans are both physically and spiritually connected to nature and hence nature is the source of human knowledge and conducts. One might wonder what kind of human behavior a person who has internalized these would project. Naturally, such a person would cast nature coping human conducts. It could be checked by studying any literary art. I have done so by studying character of Whitman as a poetic persona projected in *Leaves of Grass* mainly "Song of Myself."

As the poetic character of the poem "Song of Myself," and of course of many other poems, Whitman does not make any difference between himself and his fellow partners and even animals. He claims that he is an amalgam of all parts and elements of nature and cosmos and hence he could turn to be animals without any hesitation. As Whitman takes nature as the source of inspiration and casts nature coping conducts with the fellow partners and the environment, he is a natural man. Mainly two features are seen in his character as a natural man. First is his love of humanity. He takes himself as the poet of males and females, rich and poor, beggars and lost ones. He asks the helpless ones to shoulder on him. He teaches them to come to the contact of

nature. He views that from natural living their problems could be solved as most of the problems are the result of unnatural behavior. Another feature that is found in the character of Whitman as a natural man is his love of freedom. His approach of living, expressions, care free language, and poetic structure contradict the established norms. However, he does not care about them. In many cases he knows that his own expressions crisscross one another. He intentionally lets them remain so. He takes himself as the representative of democracy and America as its savior. These reveal the fact that love and freedom are important features of nature as these are the major guiding elements of Whitman as a natural man.

Above mentioned three dominant themes of American transcendentalism – spirituality of nature, human and nature affinity and nature as the source of motivation –are my new interpretations of American transcendental literature and they are true also with ecocriticism to some extent. Like the American transcendentalists, ecocritics do not take human being fundamentally different from nature. They do not give humans higher privilege to nature. As such they do not see any moral ground in them for making any judgmental value for nature. Just opposite to the prevailing anthropocentric practice, ecocritics hold the notion that human being is not commanders but complement of nature. They take objects or elements of nature perfect on their own. So the whole effort of ecocriticism is to guide humans to value the natural world on its own. The ultimate aim of ecocriticism thus is to replace existing anthropocentric world view with non-anthropocentric one. However, this is certainly less than American transcendental treatment of human being no more different from nature.

Quite similar to American transcendentalists' pleading to make human conducts proportionate to nature, ecocritics plead for nature friendly human conducts.

They view that as humans are just one of the members –no more or less perfect and important than other members –of the biotic community, they are bound to make congenial relationship with other members of the community, not exploitative one; or else their own survival and harmony is threatened. From this ecocritics hope not only that there will be harmony among human beings but also between humans and the biotic community. Their implied slogan is that as long as the biotic community is safe and balanced, human beings are safe and balanced too.

There is some difference between American transcendentalists and ecocritics: whereas the transcendentalists take nature as the source of human motivations, the main stream ecocritics are silent about it, though some ecocritics express their views to take nature as the source of knowing truths about human life. Like the Hindu *Vedantists*, the transcendentalists think that there lurks universal soul behind all objects of the earthly phenomenon and that very element makes life possible in the earth providing the same root level natural order for all –the principle of interconnection and wholeness. And hence being one of the member species of the biotic community, human beings should know this order of life from nature and apply in life for their harmonic existence and development. However, ecocritics expect to get order in human beings and nature as the byproduct of human beings' non-anthropocentric relations with nature.

Ecocritics appear to be distinctly different from the transcendentalists in the latter's giving nature spiritual attribution. The main stream ecocritics do not define nature in terms of spirituality. They view it from the earth centered approach. By showing physical connections between humans and nature, they aim to make humans view the world from the perspective of nature. However, some ecocritics are inclined to take spirituality of nature as the source of knowing truths about human nature. And

some others ecocritics have appeared to be tending to take earth as Gaia, or higher organism. Similarly, some ecotheologists think that as the Biblical creation myth, which is spiritual one, made humans take themselves higher to nature in order, it is spiritualism that has to be used to correct it. For this, some ecotheologists turn to Biblical notion of "creation care," which urges to make "godly, just, and sustainable choices." Other ecotheologists tend to give up Judaism and Christianity in favor of Taoism, Buddhism, and Hinduism, all of which cast contemplative and reverential attitude toward nature. These might be taken as a step of ecocritics towards realizing universal soul in nature as soul holds the notion of oneness.

As American transcendentalism is no longer in practice, people with non-anthropocentric inclination naturally expect from ecocriticism to break the anthropocentric hegemony. But ecocriticism has not been a fixed cannon from the beginning. It has undergone dramatic changes from its inception. Hiltner rightly describes the whole ecocritical development by dividing it into two groups in the model of Buell: first-wave ecocriticism and second-wave ecocriticism. First-wave ecocriticism is the environmental criticism that of the last quarter of the twentieth century. It started by questioning anthropocentric ethics of giving human interest a central focus. The decades of 1980s and 1990s saw enormous influence of the deep ecology movement that revolutionized human relationship with nature by giving the latter intrinsic worth, not higher or lower status from human beings. The first-wave ecocriticism is preoccupied with nature writing, wilderness, and texts celebrating pristine environments as that of Wordsworth and Thoreau. However, the second-wave ecocriticism has taken up a range of issues. It represents the digressions that have appeared in the twenty-first century. Unlike the first one, it is directed toward a variety of landscape including cities and present environmental issues. Though

environmental justice was started in 1980s as a movement, it is continued in the second wave ecocriticism as well. With the shifts in the second-wave, ecocriticism has acquired real cultural and political relevance.

The development of ecocriticism to date can be known also from Dryzek's description of ecocritical discourses as 'green radicalism,' to which he divides into two categories: one that focuses on changing consciousness, and another that looks more explicitly to green politics. A stress on green consciousness has the conviction that the way people experience and regard the world in which they live is the key to green change. Once consciousness has changed to appropriate direction, then politics, social structures, institutions, and economic systems are expected to come to the track of green. Deep ecologists, ecofeminists, bioregionalists and ecotheologists come to this group as they plead for green consciousness. However, the greens under 'green politics' are more direct. They want to overturn anthropocentric mode of world view through action. Some expect to change it through politics and others through demonstration or movements. Under this group come green parties, social ecologists, eco-Marxists, environmental justice, and antiglobalization activities.

However the division and descriptions, different green movements have made it apparent that prevailing anthropocentric mode of human and nature relationship needs to be radically changed. They aim to change both the way people think and so behave on the one hand, and social institutions and collective decisions on the other.

Ecocriticism has developed a possible hope that green cultural change can contribute greatly in maintaining ecological balance. Ecological discourses inform and shape environmental narratives which attempt to give the environment a voice and facilitate an aesthetic appreciation that is not anthropocentric. Slovic rightly presents one common voice of several theorists of ecocriticism that ecocriticism must address the

moral urgency of the environmental degradation of the planet. Environmental justice and social-ecology are the present emphasis of ecocriticism.

A question arises: will all human needs be fulfilled by being able to create ecological balance or by giving environment a voice? The answer is certainly in the negative. To be more specific, to date environmental-justice ecocriticism is the only branch of the field that has addressed globalization issues in any depth. Ecocriticism has not presented the answers of the possible fundamental questions like what the sources of human motivation are; what basic element or notion gives humans a sense or realization that they are fundamentally related to the things of nature; what its methodological and philosophic guidance are, and so on. These are some of the reasons of ecocriticism not receiving widespread acceptance. And these are some of the reasons of some ecologists' feelings of unease in their practices. Garrard is right to say that defining their relations with the environment is one of the key challenges of ecocritical scholarship. Cultural critics might not be right in separating human beings from nature but they are certainly right in criticizing ecocritics for not giving sufficient attention to the cultural matrix. Similarly, Phillips is also right in cautioning the ecocritics not to live so much in the environmental myth or what he calls as epiphany.

In sum, if American transcendentalists are spiritual in nature, ecocritics are earth centered. If the formers dissolve themselves in nature, the latter do not do so – they feel ok from their friendly relationship with nature. Likewise, if the formers take human being as nature, the latter give only intrinsic worth to nature. Furthermore, whereas the formers detect natural human values like love and freedom from nature and apply in life, the latter are silent about the process of building human values. These show that American transcendentalists are far more biocentric than ecocritics.

Basic concern of ecocriticism is to replace still dominant anthropocentric world view with non-anthropocentric or biocentric one. Environmental justice and social ecology are its major prevailing focuses. From this they hope that exploitation to nature will be stopped and harmony in human being and nature will be created. However, even if their mission of spreading non-anthropocentric world view is fulfilled, their responsibility as ecosophers to answer the philosophic questions like what truth is, what human being is and with what principle they should move forward remain unanswered. To acquire status of a complete philosophy, there has to be a central concept, which is lacking in ecocriticism. The whole thrust or argument of the dissertation is that ecocritics might find reliable solutions for all these in the core of American transcendentalism.

### **Conclusion: Ecocritical Maturity from American Transcendentalism**

Human motivations are directed by systems of values. Ecocriticism does not find current anthropocentric modes of values guiding human beings toward patterns of behavior that would be less detrimental to the environment and social justice. So it efforts to create harmony in human beings and in the environment by replacing anthropocentric system of values with non-anthropocentric ones. However, the practitioners of ecocriticism have felt some unease regarding theoretical and methodological guidance. This lack of theoretical and methodological guidance is related to philosophy. Ecocritics have remained silent about if human philosophic needs will be fulfilled by being successful in replacing the anthropocentric system of values with non-anthropocentric ones. Furthermore, they do not have clear notions regarding source of human motivations and also regarding how they can approach about human values like spirituality, love, freedom, and so on. If they claim or want to make ecocriticism as a responsible, reliable, and adoptable literary and critical

theory of the present, these questions have to be dealt within the spectrum of ecocriticism or environmental philosophy – ecosophy. It appears that this lack can be fulfilled by applying the dominant features of American transcendentalism – spirituality of nature, human being as nature, and nature as the source of human motivation –in ecocriticism.

Though both American transcendentalism and ecocriticism somehow match in taking human being as the part of nature, not as its master, the main stream ecocriticism does not appear to have shown definite interest in taking nature as the source of human motivations. Nor does it show alternative sources of human motivations. The major focus of ecocriticism is to diminish the prevailing anthropocentric world view by giving intrinsic worth to nature. Ecocritics have a faint hope that problems related to human relationships one among and with nature will be resolved if non-anthropocentric world view becomes tool of reasoning. This might be possible, but there has to be given proper clarification or guidance how this might be so. American transcendentalists confidently claim that nature is the source of human motivations and they apply it in life. For instance, Whitman pleads for love and freedom because he takes himself as the part of nature and he finds such features in nature. From such method of reasoning, human conducts naturally become proportionate to nature like that of Whitman as the poetic persona. Thus it might be advisable for ecocritics not to hesitate in acknowledging the fact that symbolical significance of the objects of nature are the building blocks for guiding human conducts.

Furthermore, it is advisable for ecocritics to apply American transcendental notion of spirituality in nature as well, no matter with some clarification or modifications. The objects of nature cannot become the source of human knowledge



and conducts in ordinary sense. In literal sense, a stone is simply a hard substance made up of proton and neutrons, this is finished. It is only in transcendental sense the objects of nature import spirituality and hence can become the source of human motivations. For instance, one should follow and apply peace in one's conducts because one is the part of nature and it is one of the features of nature, which can be understood only from its symbolical or spiritual significance. It is only in the transcendental sense natural objects like fire, wind, water, and sun, for instance, are worshiped as Gods in the *Vedas*. Learned people might give some extra significance to the objects of nature. For instance, it is in the transcendental sense, a cylindrical shaped stone known as *shibalinga* (phallus), kept upright on a flat rimmed chalice shaped stone, is the image of Hindu God Shiva. And there is no harm in doing so as the *shibalinga* made up of stone itself is a representative of nature, and God itself is an all inclusive concept.

Spiritual way of learning from nature becomes clear if one studies how Lord Buddha used to teach his disciples by using the symbolical significance of the objects of nature. For instance, he would teach them to be like water. Whether someone pours fragrant substance or defiled substances into water, the water receives them both without grasping or aversion, and it transforms and purifies them. Buddha's disciples would learn in this way also from other objects or elements of nature like earth, fire, air, and so on. Buddha taught his disciples to take middle path, one extreme being life of sensual pleasure another that of mortification (Hiriyanna 151). Buddha made all of his conclusions out of his deep observations and contemplative verifications of the symbolical or spiritual significance of the objects of nature.

The objective validity of spirituality of nature can be reasoned notionally as well. Ecocriticism holds the notion of wholeness –interconnectivity in the objects of

nature. From the ordinary or physical eyes, one sees everything different. The interconnectedness of physical elements of nature can be verified from scientific observations. However, there are many abstract elements of whose labyrinth of connection cannot be verified from scientific observation. To take an example, all female creatures of nature show their strong affection to their offspring. In this sense they reflect themselves as the symbols of 'love' for their offspring. 'Love' can be defined only notionally, not scientifically. If mothers reflect some symbols, no matter abstract in nature, so do other objects of nature. Nature is full with such notional symbols. And knowing nature means also knowing the meanings of such symbols as they notionally reveal its interconnected order or wholeness. American transcendentalists' attributing nature with universal spirit is just a notional concept which is used to understand the interconnectedness of the earthly objects and elements, which science and ecocriticism also agree one way or other. The basic difference is only that if science and ecocriticism seek straight forward or observable way of understanding the organic wholeness of the universe, American transcendentalism offers notional way as this is the only way of reading symbolical meanings of the objects of nature. In this sense, ecocriticism is not in the opposite pole from American transcendental concept of spirituality in nature.

The adaptability of American transcendental claim of spiritualism in nature can be verified also in terms of pantheistic notions. From the pantheistic view, nature is divine, which is generally understood in spiritual sense. For a pantheist, God is everything and everything is God. The world is either identical with God or in some way a self-expression of his nature. If God is identical with the universe, it is merely another name for the universe. It is the view that worldly things constitute a unity, and that all-inclusive unity is in some sense divine. This is the very reason behind

American transcendentalists' attributing spirituality in nature. Like a typical American transcendentalist such as Whitman or Thoreau, the pantheist tries to live in accordance with the unity and the values intrinsically associated with it. American transcendental ethics, pantheistic ethics, environmental ethics, ethics more generally are grounded in the concept of divine unity, the unifying principle that accounts for our commonality with other living and nonliving things. So far as the attached name "transcendental" is concerned, the American transcendentalists never used the term to mean that God is beyond as an unrecognizable entity. Instead, they used the term to mean that God, which is generally taken to be transcendental or beyond, is not transcendental in the real sense but is symbolized in the forms of nature. Kant, the originator of the term also used it to mean that God is a concept that can be understood not by experimenting but by reasoning.

The practicality of American transcendentalism can be known by studying everyday lives of its practitioners, who are sometimes taken to be ideal or farfetched. The transcendentalists like Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman spent whole of their lives in the societies by remaining fully busy in teaching principles of nature and ways of nature coping human conducts. Their whole thrust is just to show the fact that there is interconnectivity between human beings and other objects of nature and hence human happiness is imbedded in following its order. This inclusive notion of earthly objects could be represented by any term, be it God, soul, wholeness or whatsoever, and American transcendentalists chose "universal soul". Osho shows how important it is to know the order of nature. For him religion or dharma means following nature, the natural order of things. To be removed from one's nature is to be lost. To return to one's own nature is to return homewards. To be established in one's own nature is to be established in God. Osho thinks that only from spiritual realization harmony

between the person and the existence is created. To lead individuals towards such a realization is the whole aim of the American transcendentalists.

The whole *Vedic* philosophy is sprung from such a realization as well. Millennia ago ancient *Rsis* came to revere and adore nature in its different manifestations and, they evolved an environment friendly culture. A *Vedic* person had his or her views directed holistically towards the whole universe. *Vedic* formulation of *dharma* was based on fundamental ethical laws of nature to which all livings as well as human beings are subject. According to *Vedanta*, the world appears real only to a person who is ignorant. Once he or she realizes *Brahman* or *Pramatman* or supreme soul, the world disappears and the person sees only the transcendent –just like the “transparent eye-ball” image of Emerson in which one is immersed in nature.

Similar is the notion and practice of American transcendentalists. There is no fundamental difference in meaning between their coinage of “soul,” “universal soul” or “Over Soul” and *Vedantic atman*, *Brahman*, or *pramatma*. There is nothing wrong in the transcendentalists’ taking the meanings symbolized by objects of nature like water as “universal soul,” which further indicates the oneness of all the objects. The ecocritics call this as ‘organic unity’ or so. Difference between American transcendentalists and ecocritics is only in name, not in concept. In this sense, spirituality is the very inherent quality of the project of ecocriticism. One of the basic elements of deep ecology is self realization. “Self realization means identification with a larger organic “Self” beyond the individual person; or “self-in-Self” as they put it” (Dryzek 197). The idea is to cultivate a deep consciousness and awareness of the organic unity, of the holistic nature of the ecological webs in which every individual is enmeshed. There is not any fundamental difference between “organic Self” and “universal soul”: both bear some logical realities.

Thus, there is no harm for ecocritics in fully recognizing even the American transcendental concept of spirituality in nature. However, it might be argued that American transcendentalism had already been rejected and hence what good ecocriticism could get by applying its features. It is not that there is no any truth behind what the transcendentalists proposed. It is only that people of the period of American transcendentalism were reluctant in applying the complex biocentric transcendental notions into their practical lives as it would certainly take time to understand them first. Furthermore, the then governments were also not ready to bow to the individual dignities as appealed by the transcendentalists to be regarded: Thoreau's resistance to civil government was just for this. If there is a bulk of individuals, no matter of philosophers who hold the views similar to that of the American transcendentalists or pantheists, there is likely to come such cognition also in common people as they are supposed and are naturally inclined in following appropriate philosophic notions sooner or later.

From the full application of the features of American transcendentalism in ecocriticism, no matter in the modified form, in regard to human and nature relationships, the ecocritical need of 'universally accepted model' or 'single, dominant world-view guiding ecocritical practice' or the need of 'central, dominant doctrine or theoretical apparatus' could be fulfilled. From this, people, like the American transcendentalists, could take that humans are not only physically but also spiritually imbedded with nature; and hence they could declaratively take nature as truth, human being as nature, and nature as the source of human motivations and so make their conducts proportionate to nature by adopting natural values like love and freedom. From this, ecocriticism could get every room and methodological tools to deal with human conducts and human and nature relationship related problems. For

instance, an ecocritic would proudly say that his or her source of motivations is nature and hence if his or her actions do not cope with nature, he out rightly drops them. Similarly, in evaluating a literary art or idea, an ecocritic would first check whether the work has applied anthropocentric or non-anthropocentric world view. Then they would find if its characters are immersed in nature or remained aloof from it. And finally they would study what values the work intends to show, natural or artificial. They would praise natural values. There would not be any confusion.

On the whole, ecocriticism could comply with American transcendental claims that nature represents universal soul, that human being is the part of nature and that nature is the source of human motivations. From it humans would move forward by detecting and adopting natural values like love and freedom. They might not take “universal soul” as God or farfetched concept but as a unifying concept just like ‘universal whole,’ which is a concept that represents the basic unity of the worldly things. Whole Hindu and Buddhist philosophies and pantheism are built under such a concept. When ecocritics apply such American transcendental features, their practitioners do not have to face any methodological or theoretical difficulties. This would create such a consciousness in human beings that there would not be any feeling of hierarchy among the fellow partners and between humans and nature. From such a consciousness there would not be any sort of exploitation to human beings and to nature. Instead, there would be a healthy practice of respect, unity, cooperation, and development. Then ecocriticism, as a philosophic and methodological guide for such a practice, could be accepted as a matured or well developed ecosystemic literary and critical philosophy from which harmony in human beings and in nature could be guaranteed as they are interconnected and interdependent. If coping with nature like this becomes a dominant human practice, human world will catch the preordained

right path from which philosophy based most problems can and will be resolved, and hence harmony will be created in human beings and nature. Donald Worster rightly puts, “Ecology ... seemed to be a science that dealt with harmony, a harmony found in nature, offering a model for a more organic, cooperative human community” (363).

### **Implications of the Study**

The dissertation has not only made a new and in-depth biocentric study of American transcendental literature in relation to human and nature relationship, it has also discerned gaps of ecocriticism and supplied reliable alternatives to fulfill them. Most of all, it has offered a new way of interpretation that is grounded on fundamental realities of nature. So it gives a possible hope for lasting harmony in human being and nature.

From the dissertation, students of literature, political and social sciences, and philosophy in general and students of American transcendentalism, ecocriticism or environmental studies, and cultural studies in particular, can know major tenets of American transcendentalism and ecocriticism or environmental studies regarding human and nature relationship. As both American transcendentalism and ecocriticism are oriented towards nature for studying human and nature relationships, ecocriticism, as one of the prevailing dominant literary and critical theories, could note its some other subtle shortcomings –not noticed in the dissertation –from the comparative study between the two and thereby might correct if any.

Political parties and governments can also be benefited from the study. Whenever they are confused in taking some decisions, they might take nature as their guide. For instance, people are divided regarding same sex marriage. If they decide by taking nature as the source of motivation, they are likely to oppose it as it is not there in nature. Government and non-governmental agencies working for nature or

environment can further intensify the importance of their works by getting subtle reasons of the needs. Governments can also extend their concern for nature and natural democratic values. Furthermore, the study has also opened up door to make in-depth studies of nature to find necessary natural human values.

### **Suggestions for Further Study**

Though I have tried my best and have proved the hypothesis that I made for the dissertation, it will not be true to claim that I have made a perfect study of the multiple subjects that I have touched. Thus it is advisable to take most of the matters I have mentioned as the hints or suggestions. Further detailed studies about most of them will make the matters more definite.

However, there are some, at least three, fields which I have not touched and which need immediate and wide studies. First, I have stated that human nature can be studied only in relation to nature and there is a strong necessity to do this. But I have not shown what of human natures have to be studied and how it could be done. Hence, there should be certain methodological tools how the objects of nature can be linked to the study of human nature. For instance, there might be general categorization of the objects of nature showing what of them represent what features related with human beings. Then, conduct related needs of human beings should be studied or be verified by studying the symbols or suggested meanings of the related objects of nature.

Second, nature related original human features should be discerned and studied in detail. Whitman has implicitly claimed that 'love' and 'freedom' are some natural features of human beings. There are so many other important features of (human) nature that have to be studied and applied in human life for the harmony of human beings and nature. Thus areas required for the detection of the natural human



features should be fixed first. Then human nature related to those needs should be studied accordingly by means of suggestive features of the related objects of nature.

Finally, every study requires to be guided by some theoretical and methodological guidelines. Though both American transcendentalism and ecocriticism are nature based practices, to be sure, they have not given concrete philosophic guidelines that could be applied in connecting humans one another and in showing human and nature interrelationship. The better and natural the philosophy the longer it lasts. American transcendentalism lasted only for about three decades. Complexity was one of its weaknesses. Since it is no longer in practice, no suggestion is required for this. Suggestions have been supplied for ecocriticism that there is still a terrible need in ecocriticism to emphasize human beings and nature equally and cannons for this can be developed by combining the dominant features of both American transcendentalism and ecocriticism. The whole thrust of the dissertation is to prove this. However, it may not have well shown how and where the features of American transcendentalism and ecocriticism can be combined.

Inquisitive researchers might proceed for these and add some more bricks in the long started journey of building up a nature centered just philosophy for the harmony of human beings, of other species, and of the earth rinmother.

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