

## The Fragrance of Ecocriticism: An Investigation of the Environmental Consciousness in the Select Poems of the Northeast Writers

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### Abstract

The Northeast of India has been a subject of curiosity, joy, adventure, etc., since ancient time. In terms of the creative writing, the writers of both old and new generations have voiced out the environmental concerns or issues through their eco-friendly poems and short stories. The natural landscapes of the northeast India possess the ecological diversity and balance to a healthy extent in comparison with the other regions of India. As far as the quality and resources of water are concerned, there are crystal clear or transparent lakes, rivers, waterfalls, ponds, etc. There is a plethora of lush green trees, plants, herbs. Moreover, the flowers of different colors and fragrances ensure the heavenly experience and the people are eco-friendly in terms of the conservation of mountains, forests, rivers, species, etc.

Over the years, there has been unwholesome trilling and cutting of trees across the mountains in name of industrialization. Water resources are losing their natural qualities or vitality due to pollution.

That's why the Northeast writers have showcased all the aspects of the nature or natural environment to make the people aware or conscious of the positive outcomes of having balanced ecology for the healthy lives of all the living creatures or species and also the smooth functioning of the Earth's natural eco-systems. The present paper is an attempt to decode all the relevant environmental issues or concerns through the selection of relevant creative works of famous writers of the Northeast.

### Introduction:

English literature encompasses or mirrors a number of themes which bring into fore the social, environmental concerns, etc., of respective period of time. As far as the environmental concerns in Indian Writing in English is concerned, Sarojini Naidu, Rabindranath Tagore, Amitabh Ghosh,

Dilip Chitre, Gieve Patel, K.N. Daruwalla, Arundhati Roy, Kiran Desai, Anita Desai, Vandana Shiva, etc., and also the writers of the Northeast such as, Temsula Ao, Kynpham Sing Nongkynrih, Robin Singh Ngangom, Mamang Dai, Pradip Kumar Patra, Easterine Iralu, etc., have realistically depicted/unravelled all the pressing concerns of the global environment through the means of their poetical/ prose works. These literary personalities hold an evergreen place as far as the literary horizon of Indian Writing in English is concerned. They hail from different places of India, but their literary outputs spread the sweet fragrance of Ecocriticism for making the readers/ people opt for eco-friendly deeds, thus ensuring the environmental/ecological harmony.

The northeast India is rich in natural treasures as far as the number of mountains, lakes, plants, trees is concerned. The poems of the northeast writers lay emphasis over the preservation and protection of species, landscapes, etc. Moreover, they motivate the local tribes/people with respect to how to maintain the natural beauty, greenery and coolness of their place. The relevance of the term 'Ecocriticism' is grounded on the concrete fact of its universal acceptance, for it assures the possibility of decoding all the aspects of the environment and having an understanding of the diagnosis of the environmental hazards or crisis. Cheryll Glotfelty is a professor of literature and environment at Nevada University, Reno, USA. She is definitely a pioneer in making 'Ecocriticism' hold an important place in the horizon of English literature. She edited an eco-friendly book with Harold Fromm entitled *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* (1996). This book contains eco-sensitive essays which help the readers in understanding the conditions of the global environment. Cheryll Glotfelty gives a very clear definition of 'Ecocriticism' by saying that "Ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and physical environment" (Glotfelty, xviii) Lawrence Bull defines it "a study of the relationship between literature and the environment conducted in a spirit of commitment to environmentalist's praxis" (Bull, 430.) In addition to this, Lawrence Bull defines it as "the environment-oriented study of literature and the arts more generally, and to the theories that underlie such critical practice". (Buell, 138) This definition is also very much pertinent in terms of knowing the environment through literature.

Kynpham Sing Nongkynrih is a renowned poet of Meghalaya, and his poems are highly appreciated for being his realistic depiction of the experience of his long time spent in Sohra. This captivating place is full of natural beauty in the form of waterfalls and greenery. It is very special place in poet's life, for it has motivated him to a great extent for composing his nature poems, especially that of Cherrapunjee/Sohra.

With respect to the glory of Sohra, Kynpham Sing Nongkynrih writes in "The Bangalore Review" in the following words: "But most of all, I love the pure, wild rain of Sohra, which has baptized me over and over in its holy waters, linking my soul forever with its cloud-tending wind and its cherubic mists floating among, and hanging from, verdant summer trees in sanctified woods. As the rain of Chile was to Neruda, the rain of Sohra is to me "an unforgettable presence. I never tire of reading poems and writings on the Sohra rain" (Web)

Cherrapunjee/Sohra has gained an evergreen popularity worldwide, for it attracts the tourists by virtue of its serene natural beauty with plethora of colourful flowers and green trees. It means

the beholder will find lush green landscapes with continuous rainfalls in Sohra, Meghalaya. In other words, Sohra is a tourists’ destination of utmost wonder, for it is known for the highest rainfalls.

Kynpham Sing Nongkynrih showcases the constructive and soothing magic of Sohra in his “A Day in Sohra” wherein he welcomes the healthy rain falling and skilfully attributes it as the ‘famed rain’, thus decorating rains with the most possible literary ornament. When any reader or researcher minutely reads the beginning lines of this eco-friendly poetical work, he or she will definitely reach the apex or zenith of his/her research-oriented conclusion that the poet has honestly extended his gratitude to Sohra for being a rare motivation in his life. Additionally, he pays his hearty reverence to Sohra and takes immense delight in describing the natural rhythm of raining. The poet is in his happy mood and suggests the visitors not to be panic amidst the raining of Sohra. This picnic trip must be a memorable celebration for them and their families/friends. The rainfalls are natural, symbolizing the energy of Nature. Even if the people get wet, they can avoid umbrellas so as to enjoy the famous rains of Sohra, a world-famous tourists’ destination of Meghalaya.

With respect to humans’ eco-friendly participation and attitude towards the objects of Nature/Natural landscapes, it becomes quite essential to mention the term of Ecological Humanism.

Ecological Humanism(eco-humanism) is a theoretical coinage to humanize ecology and to give humanist/human dimensions to ecology. Ecology in its multiple manifestations essentially refers to the physical macro nature and the human spiritual world including all moral and ethical values that govern the human activities. (Das, 181)

This is the famed rain,  
making a fool of sorry umbrellas!  
.....  
.....  
And now, it’s a violent downpour  
to whitewash the ditches and the roads (Web)

The inhabitants of Sohra are used to the climate/weather; they have their natural immune systems in their bodies. Even the heavy downpour can’t make their lives uncomfortable, for it will clean or wash the dust pollutants, waste materials, etc., of both ditches and roads. Thus, Kynpham Sing Nongkynrih is a celebrated poet who has popularized Sohra through his eco-friendly poems which enrich the domain of ‘Ecocriticism’ in Indian Writing in English. Pradip Kumar Patra is a famous poet from Assam. He has composed beautiful poems on Nature so as to make the readers gain the wisdom of eco-friendly response towards the natural objects. The poetical lines of “The Summer Implications” justify the significance of rain during the hot climatic conditions. The summer season is characterized by hot air or heat waves. When the temperature mounts up, plants, trees, birds, animals, etc., require plenty of water for their

survival. Therefore, Patra takes this season as an eyeopener and constructive opportunity to convince the people of this fast-paced world regarding the utility of water on this earth for different work purpose. Cool atmosphere of any region is always grounded on the fact of the availability of water resources such as, river, pond, lake, etc. When there is dearth of rainwater due to poor rainfall in any reason, it leads to the bareness of the water resources. The poet, Patra, has inculcated eco-friendly lines in this environmental poem. Hot weather condition is the consequence of global warming which does not sanction any relief to the tired people even during their sleeping time.

The summer night with her thirst  
 Quenched by the rain holds me in  
 Her lap for healthy dreams to dream  
 and healthy life to leave with no  
 allowance of any symptomatic  
 snores and sleep working (Patra, 26-31)

The coolness of weather becomes synonymous to the healthy falling of rainwater. Each word of this eco-sensitive creative work of the poet reinforces the concrete fact of his practical observation of the climate change of his place or any distant location. Distant location refers to the holiday time spent by Patra or visiting places for gaining more insights for the completion of his creative works. The summer night naturally becomes uncomfortable for humans' sound sleep if there is the shortage of rain drops or water. Intense hot season/weather and heat storms are undoubtedly the horrific results of global warming. Afforestation, control over harmful fuels, protection of trees and mountains, etc., are the decisive and effective eco-friendly initiations to counterbalance the environmental crisis of global warming which often gets transformed into climate change. As far as the environmental writing of the northeast is concerned, it becomes pertinent to mention Easterine Iralu, a renowned poetess of Nagaland, in the present time of ecological imbalance. "For Justin- Pierre" is poignant and eyeopener poetical work, for it embodies the poet's eco-conscious mind in light of uncontrolled exploitation of Nature in name of material/technical advancements. Decoding the words of this eco-sensitive poem, readers or researchers will find this poetess in manifold roles for environmental wisdom worldwide. The poetess conceives of herself both as a teacher and poet. As a teacher, she tries her utmost to answer or give solution to the questions or worries of the present generation in terms of the ongoing distortion of the physical environment or landscape. The solutions or remedies of the ecological unrest is permeated in the poem. Iralu is a creative writer of prolific personality, for she not only unhides the actual condition of flora, fauna, animals/creatures, mountains, trees, rivers, etc., but lets the readers decode the possible solutions for ecological stability. If there is no any mess or turbulence in the climate or weather, it will definitely help the creatures/animals, birds, plants, trees, crops, etc., flourish and the same also provides them required nourishment for their healthy growth and long life span. As a poetess, she is satisfied with her creative output, for the selection of the theme/topic is definitely noble in terms of its universal acceptance/significance of having ecological/environmental harmony.

Some day you will ask

Why the birds no longer sing  
 and the flowers as sweet  
 as I said they used to do;  
 why the rivers no longer have fish,  
 and the trees, green leaves,  
 and wonder all the rainbows went. (Iralu, 1-7)

This eco-sensitive poem makes the world aware of the consequence of global warming and climate change. These two factors are undoubtedly responsible for the disappearance and migration of birds, animals, butterflies, etc. Water shortage as a product poor rainfall eco-sensitizes the people towards the relevance of trees, rivers and mountains, etc. Easterine Iralu has interwoven each line of this poem with utmost care so as to help the readers and researchers gain maximum wisdom of the major ecological/environmental issues of the modern time. Climate change disfigures the natural glow of flowers, grasses, herbs, crops, fruits, etc. Loosing the natural colour of any plant, fruit, flower is a clear eye-opening indication of having poor irrigation. It is a well proved fact that water is a life force; it is meant for vigour and vitality. The natural flow of water in ponds, rivers, lakes, etc., symbolizes healthy climatic conditions of that region /place. The concluding lines of this environmental poem addresses the ecological issues of river pollution and the lost greenery of the natural landscape. River pollution is an issue of aquatic ecology. Hence the word ‘fish’ stands for all the creatures of water. The issue of the lost or vanished fishes is not a minor occurrence in the aquatic ecology. It has become impersonal as far as the living conditions of all the creatures of river is concerned. Healthy condition in the aquatic regions depends on the level of water pollution. To uproot water pollution, people must be eco-conscious in avoiding the usage of plastics. Moreover, farmers must opt for the natural farming which stops the callous effects of the poisonous crops due to frequent usage of pesticides and fertilizers. A River/lake or pond which is nearby factories or unhealthy flow of water undoubtedly becomes the victim of pollution. ‘Green trees’ signify ‘green leaves. Having healthy greenery on this earth is the need of the present time. Greenery of any place or region becomes strong evidence of healthy mechanism of environment wherein the people can talk about ecotopia having peace/harmony and prosperity everywhere. The poem advocates perennial or everlasting greenery worldwide.

### Conclusion

The northeast poets have played a pivotal role in shaping Indian Writing in English through an artistic incorporation of the fragrance of their native soil in highlighting relevant social and ecological concerns. In this chapter, Kynpham Sing Nongkynrih, Pradip Kumar Patra, and Easterine Iralu have emerged as the pioneers in raising an awareness with respect to the environment through their poems encompassing the themes of global warming, climate change, pollution, loss of green trees or greenery, etc. Their poems are the outcomes of their practical observations of the unprecedented changes in the weather and landscape. As far as having a complete understating of the Earth’s ecology and biodiversity is concerned, it is quite essential to read and research on the poems/short stories and novels of the creative writers of the northeast.

The possible diagnosis of counterbalancing the effect of ecological crisis is permeated in the literary works of these northeast poets/writers.

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