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Ecological Consciousness in Recent Indian English Fiction



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Abstract

The spectre of global warming has shaken mankind like never before. Uncontrolled urbanization and industrialization coupled with emissions from vehicles, air-conditioners, etc. on the one hand and senseless deforestation and exploitation of natural resources on the other have brought us face-to-face with a daunting scenario. It is but appropriate that the literary world should take up cudgels and make reading public including the young generation aware of the urgency to take corrective measures. Leading Indian writers have produced literary works that underline their concern in this regard. My paper explores the domain of Indian English Fiction and critically studies works by eminent authors like Amitav Ghosh, Kiran Desai, Arundhati Roy and some not-so-eminent ones and concludes common concern even as these deal with life in different areas affected by different types of problems in different milieu.

Keywords: Indian English Literature, Ecology, Global warming, Postcolonial, Postmodernism

Literature has always been engaged with different moods of nature. It sings nature's beauty, freshness and tranquility that have had a salubrious influence on humans. At the same time, it also narrates the sublime and terrifying moods of nature which humbled man and showed him his place in the universe. This is a truism that applies also to the most ancient form of literature, viz., poetry which developed in all societies of the world.

In English literature, the focus on nature can be seen since the time of Shakespeare which goes on till the 18th century, when the term 'nature' got supplanted by human nature and a

gradual confrontation set in between nature and culture. Culture was then weighted more than nature, with the fillip it got from advances in science. Reaction set in with Rousseau's concept of 'noble savage' that ignited the French Revolution and the short-lived Romantic phase which could not survive the onslaught of industrialization. The advancement of science could not be checked.

Culture was supported by science. So, far from correcting the imbalance for future generations, the sharp focus on psychology in modern literature further distanced it from the physical world. The political crises in Europe that followed the First World War had a deep impact on individual mind and so literature turned from colourful pageant of nature to a functional art form, shorn of all trappings with the microscope zooming in on the human psyche only. The tussle has remained intractable so that in these postmodern times, we look upon this relationship as an ambivalent nature/culture binary or nature/humanity binary in which neither term is to be preferred to the other. This being the case, it is quite 'natural' or 'in order' to admit nature as an independent entity.

At the same time, empirical evidence shows that the actual consequences of giving a raw deal to nature have been very serious for humankind. The phenomenon of global warming leading to a hole in the ozone layer around the globe, melting glaciers, rising sea levels, climatic catastrophes being felt all around in the world are too glaring to be glossed over. It is more than clear to man that he can neglect nature at his own peril only. Consequently, literary scholars have once again focussed their attention on nature.

In contemporary Indian English literature, the normal tendency has been to follow the trends in Western literature even as the basic tenets of postmodernism lend legitimacy to the native and local elements. Whatever the case, there is consolation in finding nature being treated differently from the purely scientific-intellectual standpoint, which itself has mercifully seen its weaknesses in having mercilessly ravaged nature all along and brought the world close to an ecological disaster.

While surveying Indian English Literature for marking its links with nature, what strikes at first instance is that in poetry, the concern with nature is at its utmost, which is justified, considering that poetry is the first genre that enchanted humanity at the dawn of civilization. Drama, on the other hand, seems totally bereft of this engagement but then Indian English drama is not so rich either. Let us, then, analyse some contemporary fictional texts – a genre that is presently the most voluminous -- to find out the attitude towards nature.

As we undertake this exercise to focus on place, land, niche, home, habitat, etc., our main concern is to discover the writer's point of view with regard to nature. The various issues can be:

Is it just to provide a background and give a sense of physical context to what is denoted by the term ‘pen-picture’ in literature so that the reader feels that he is viewing a scene through the mental eye? Is nature portrayed as an independent entity out there just as the existentialists speak of ‘being-there’ in its own right? Does it have any impact on humans living in its lap like the symbiotic relationship between the mother and child? Are the values expressed in the work consistent with what is termed as ‘eco-ethics’ or sound ecological principles? Also, is there some fresh thinking on ways to tackle the suicidal destruction of nature that mankind has been indulging in? Does the literary work seek to re-mould our aesthetic appreciation of nature – of what we consider as scenic or sublime etc.?

Indian English Fiction and Ecology

In Indian English Fiction, the ecological concerns have always been there in various degrees. In early fictional writing, as in Raja Rao’s *Kanthapura*, the villagers venerate the river Kanchamma as the Hindus all over India worship the Ganga. In R.K. Narayan’s Malgudi-centric fiction, we find the benevolent influence of the river Sarayu on different characters. There is mention of the retreat across the river, of jungle-tribes living in hills, etc. all of which makes it a mysterious place imbued with the spirit of the place. Later in Kamala Markandaya’s novels we see the evil impact of urbanization. The love for one’s inherited land is integral to any environmental discourse. In her novel, *Nectar in a Sieve*, industrialization and drought – as onslaughts of man and nature – combine to pauperize Nathan. Being old, he is unable to take to any other trade and is forced to migrate to city with his wife and they turn to beggary!

In fiction, the use of names of flora and fauna is done sometimes to symbolize human condition which shows the ecological concern of the author. At other places, such description becomes necessary to the context of the narrative. In novels by Arundhati Roy, Anita Desai, Kiran Desai and many others, one finds that the description of local culture and lifestyle cannot be complete without reference to birds, insects, animals and even vegetation.

Arundhati Roy, an author-turned-activist, has passionately championed the cause of ecology. With Vandana Shiva and Medha Patkar, she fought against the proposed Narmada dam project. In her celebrated novel *The God of Small Things* (1997), one finds nature in its pristine glory in the form of the free-flowing river Meenachal. The beauty of the landscape attracts the attention of the writer and the river Meenachal, seen through child’s eyes – as the entire novel’s point of view – evokes a beautiful picture in the reader’s mind: “It was warm, the water green like reapplied silk. With fish in it. With the sky and trees in it. And at night, the broken yellow moon in it” (123). But modernization changes things. Over a period of time, we find the change in culture with modern trappings of life changing public attitude: “Years later when Rahel returned, it greeted her with a ghastly skull’s smile, with holes where teeth had been and a limp

hand raised from a hospital bed....Despite the fact that it was June, and raining, the river was no more than a swollen drain now” (124).

The river had lost its pristine beauty and it “smelled of shit and pesticides brought with World Bank loans. Most of the fish had died. The ones that survived suffered from fin-rot and had broken out in boils” (13). The river is full of plastic bags, weeds and untreated factory effluents. The novel gives a vivid description of harmful effects of modernization on animals. A temple elephant dies when it comes into contact with a high tension electric wire, but Chacko is indifferent to this news. On the other hand, a puppy follows Estha when he returns after twenty-three years to Ayemenen and tries to show his intimacy but Estha is indifferent towards him.

The theme of degradation of natural habitat due to urbanization and industrialization is not new. We have seen tragedies on a gigantic scale in the form of the Bhopal Gas Tragedy in which the American multinational Union Carbide took all the earnings when the going was good but when, due to the poor upkeep of machinery, the lethal gas leaked out killing some 2500 people and maiming for life a large number of people, the company simply shut the door on the people including its employees. The hapless people were taken for a ride not only by the MNC but also by their own government which colluded with the multinational. A graphic account of the tragedy that life had become for the people is given by Indra Sinha in his novel *Animal's People*. The protagonist, a 19-year old boy, cannot stand up; he has to walk on all fours due to the effect of harmful chemicals released from factory. He was not always like that as Ma Franci tells him: “Such a beautiful little boy you were, when you were three, four, years. Huge eyes you had, black like the Upper Lake at midnight plus a whopping head of curls. How you used to grin. [...] your smile would break a mother's heart” (1). And now he dreads the mirror! His plight can be compared to that of the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, who were maimed for life due to bombing by America.

Here in Ayemenon, Velutha is the god of small things. He is a man in harmony with the habitat, so he earns his living by making small things from wood and other natural materials. Roy describes him as making “tiny windmills, rattle, minute jewels boxes out of dried palm reeds; he could carve perfect boats out of tapioca stems and figurines on cashew nuts” (74). When he is driven out of his house by his mother, he takes refuge in the lap of nature near the bank of the river. He catches fish from the river and cooks it in open fire and he sleeps on the bank of the river reminding us of the heroine of Margaret Atwood's *Surfacing*. His thirteen night physical relationship with Ammu starts and progresses near the bank of the river. Nature is the witness of their relationship.

Nature does have impact on the way people conduct their lives. It is raw nature that is at work in brother-sister liaison in *The God of Small Things*. The two transgress the barriers raised

by society and respond to the natural urge. Does the writer approve of this kind of relationship? This is left unanswered as no fallout from this link ensues and no character comments on it.

Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* (2004) is a perfect piece of eco-fiction. Not only does it highlight the ecology of a unique natural region, the lifestyle of the people and animals, etc., but also deals with important questions that have a bearing on ecology and the human population that is umbilically attached to it. Long back, the economist T.R. Malthus had pointed out that "the power of population is indefinitely greater than the power in the earth to produce subsistence for man" (73). How, in search of subsistence, the dispossessed tend earth to bear fruit for them is graphically portrayed in *The Hungry Tide*. Also, the novel discusses the politics of multinationals that results in a horrible episode in which thousands of people are killed. In addition, there is a tender love theme that progresses through the warp and woof of the novel but which transcends the barriers of language, class and culture.

The reader comes across the protagonists Kanai Dutt and Piyali (or Piya) Roy early on in the novel. While the former is a Delhi based businessman running a translation agency, the latter is a Bengali-American scientist from the US. Kanai, in his forties, is on his way to an aunt, who runs a charity hospital on one of the islands – Lusibari and has invited her nephew to come and take charge of a bundle of papers of her deceased husband, who was also an intellectual activist. Piya is in her twenties and is in India to study the behaviour of dolphins.

According to the environmentalist Jonathan Bate, the dilemma of Green reading is that "it must, yet it cannot, separate ecopoetics from ecopolitics" (266). The MNCs, for example, tinkering with the genes of seeds and flowers for their exploitative innovations must be at loggerheads with the ecologists. The central political issue in Ghosh's novel is the infamous 1979 Morichjhapi massacre of Hindu migrants from the then East Pakistan. Around 30000 migrants had settled in the Sundarbans despite its inhospitable terrain with a large number of small islands which got submerged with frequent waves rushing in from the sea. These islands had mangrove forests and dangerous creatures like tigers. The West Bengal government which was in collusion with the business house known as Sahara Pariwar is on record as having evicted around 10000 people from Jambudwip Island in 2002 because the corporate wanted to set up a tourist resort. On the face of it, the idea of a beautifully maintained natural habitat to be touted to the tourists seems to favour ecological maintenance, but the reality is different.

But we are not concerned as much with this story as with the backdrop of Sundarbans spread over parts of India and Bangladesh, where nature always challenges man. However, the refugees were able to live in a symbiotic relationship with nature – deriving their sustenance while at the same time minding the conservation part. They had the dream of resettling in the Sundarbans which they considered as part of their motherland. (165). They rapidly established

Marichjhapi as one of the best developed islands of the Sundarbans. Within a few months, a thriving localized economy without any government support was built in the region. However, the negative fallout was that the Left Front government of West Bengal felt slighted at the successful resettlement of refugees in Marichjhapi and accused them of having violated the forest acts and caused serious ecological imbalance. (Mohanty 176).

The novel throws in bold relief the novelist's understanding and espousal of the cause of nature. According to Ghosh, nature is all that "included everything not formed by human intention." (142) and it is self-sustaining, as for example, the fish "scrape off the diatoms and other edible matter attached to each grain of sand" (142). The writer also examines various myths, legends, anecdotes and beliefs that circulate in the layman's domain. At the same time, he has taken up various historical facts and scientific theories which form the intellectual discourse of nature and habitation.

Ghosh has gathered large data on the way man has ravaged nature. For example, during the Khmer Rouge insurgency in Laos, the rebel forces killed dolphins to extract oil for running their vehicles (305). He has also explored history, as he clarifies in the epilogue to the novel and found out that Money S' Daniel wanted a new society set up here where there would be no exploitation. Ghosh has tried to unearth the history of different environmentalists who helped the cause of nature. They include people like Mr. Paddington who disfavoured setting up of a port at Matla but Lord Canning did not heed his warning. The result was that a powerful gale washed away the port in 1871. (286-87).

Through the character of Piya or Piyoli Roy, Ghosh has crafted a character who has devoted her life to the study and preservation of nature. A woman, it is ironically believed by the eco-feminists in our times, is a better custodian of nature than man. "Women have been associated with nature, the material, the emotional, and the particular, while men have been associated with culture, the nonmaterial, the rational, and the abstract" (Davion 9). The support for this stand is found in early human societies. "Eco-feminists have claimed that archaeological research reveals that such early societies were ecological, equal and matriarchal" (Gimbutas in Derek 21).

There is also the supporting concept of 'gaia' – the earth goddess of Greek mythology, which has been dug out to fit in with the ecological view of earth as a self-supporting organism. This is not unknown in India where the first morning Puranic mantra to be chanted after rising from bed refers to the earth goddess. Therefore, Derek is right in concluding that "The concept of an Earth goddess is nearly universal and certainly ancient. Egyptian, Greek, Indian and Jewish traditions, to name but a few, provide us with female Earth deities" (74).

We find an interesting dialogue between Kanai and Piya on the issue of preservation of dangerous animals like tigers. While Kanai is a leftist who blames the Western ‘patrons’ who disregarding human cost that goes into protecting wildlife with the aid of Indian accomplices like him even as they themselves keep a large number of animals in captivity, Piya is in favour of keeping the animals in their natural habitat. She says that it was intended so by nature:

Just suppose we crossed that imaginary line that presents us from deciding that no other species matters except ourselves. What’ll be left then? Aren’t we alone enough in the universe? And do you think it’ll stop at that? Once we decide we can kill off other species, it’ll be people next – exactly the kind of people you’re thinking of people who’re poor and unnoticed. (301).

This conjecture is in sync with the postcolonial paradigm shift from the exploitation wreaked by colonizers, to the exploitation perpetrated on the downtrodden in indigenously governed societies. About the difficulties of undertaking projects to study and preserve nature, she herself tells Kanai: “Easy?” There was a parched weariness in Piya’s voice now. ‘Kanai, tell me, do you see anything easy about what I do? Look at me: I have no home, no money and no prospects. My friends are thousands of kilometers away and I get to see them maybe once a year, if I’m lucky. And that’s the least of it. On top of that is the knowledge that what I’m doing is more or less futile” (302).

One has to add to this scenario the official apathy and corruption are the major factors responsible for the degradation of eco-system. When Piya applies for the permission to scour the Sundarbans rivers for her research project, she is forced to have an official guard as escort. Ironically, it is the guard who, in cahoots with the boatman whom she is again forced to hire much against her wishes, fleeces her and even steals her camera at the end of the work-day. They could have done her physical harm too as was apparent from their behaviour, but Fokir’s entry at the right time averted it.

The philosophical guru of ‘deep ecology’ Arne Naess puts forth some key observations which must find mention here before we turn to the crucial problem faced by the denizens of the Sundarbans. According to Naess, the well-being and flourishing of human and non-human life on the planet earth has value in itself and secondly, this value is independent of the usefulness of the nonhuman world for human purposes. But the flourishing of human life and cultures is compatible with a substantially smaller human population. (Naess in Sessions: 68). Now, this observation at once pits the human interest against the interest of the non-human world, for what we see is the depletion of non-human population and a rise in the human population. This human/non-human hierarchy in inter-species rationality is linked to other such binaries like civilization/savagery or culture/nature and is indeed intractable.

While the ecologists have their point of view regarding preservation of nature, the migrants demand their right to life. The government's stand is this: "This island has to be saved for its trees, it has to be saved for its animals, it is a part of a reserve forest, it belongs to a project to save tigers, which is paid for by people from all around the world."

The postcolonialists point out that when the colonizers annexed lands of the artless and simple humans living in close proximity with nature as in the settler colonies of America and Australia, they considered the native people as little better than animals. Therefore, when these colonizers of yore come forward to protect the animals, there are bound to be misgivings. Quoting Robert Cribb on the issue of the Dutch colonizers' legislation in Australia, critics Huggan and Tiffin point out: "The creation of national parks and the protection of endangered species have both excluded indigenous peoples from regions they have occupied and managed for centuries and have hampered them from using natural resources as an economic base from which to seek 'modernity' – a modernity into which European incursion had already propelled them" (Huggan and Tiffin 187).

Here, in the context of the Sundarbans, the migrants' response to the 'project tiger' is articulated before Nirmal by Kusum, which also takes on the delicate issue of notional right of the animal world to exist vis-à-vis needs of human existence:

"Every day, sitting here, with hunger gnawing at our bellies, we would listen to these words, over and over again. Who are these people, I wondered, who love animals so much that they are willing to kill us for them? Do they know what is being done in their names? Where do they live, these people, do they have children, do they have mothers, fathers? As I thought of these things it seemed to me that this whole world has become a place of animals, and our fault, our crime was that we were just human beings, trying to live as human beings always have, from the water and the soil" (261-2).

Even though Ghosh examines the different theories propounded by J. Feuerer regarding how the tigers turned into man-eaters (240), for the landless people the tiger becomes a symbol of the state which seeks to discipline them in the name of the tiger.

Towards the end of the novel, when Piya finds the carcass of a dolphin, the circumstantial evidence and Fokir's testimony suggest that the careless official guards were responsible for its death: "...it was probably some kind of official boat, used by uniformed personnel – maybe from the coastguard or the police or even the Forest Department. It had one speeding down the channel, earlier in the day, and the inexperienced calf had been slow to move out of its way" (346).

A powerful note is sounded with the nature overruling the human division of society on the basis of class and leading to the union of Piya and Fokir at a time when a powerful cyclone strikes the area. Both of them have to take shelter on the branch of a sturdy tree. She hugs the tree and Fokir sitting at her back too hugs her and both of them are tied to the tree with the help of Moyna's old sari. "She could feel the bones of his cheeks as if they had been superimposed upon her own; it was as if the storm had given them what life could not; it had fused them together and made them one" (390). On the whole, Ghosh gives a balanced treatment to various issues involved in maintaining the ecological balance.

Another great novelist and Booker winner Kiran Desai's focus in her novel *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006) on the geographical nature, apart from being an aesthetic embellishment, also forms an allied motif of home. If the consciousness of home lies at the deeper level in the novel, that of the habitat is felt at the surface level, at the level of allied motif. The idyllic description in the vein of pastoral representation of the hill station shows Desai's ecological leanings, which she has inherited from her mother Anita Desai, the well-known novelist. If Nanda Kaul merges with the atmosphere in *Fire on the Mountain*, in *The Inheritance of Loss*, it is the house that merges with the landscape: 'When she looked back, the house was gone; when she climbed the steps back to the veranda, the garden vanished. [...] The gray had permeated inside, as well, settling on the silverware, nosing the corners, turning the mirror in the passageway to cloud' (2).

Exotic details of nature -- of flora and fauna and lush vegetation -- at the foot of the Kanchenjunga present a veritable feast for the nature lovers. Even the solitude of the inhabitants of Cho Oyu has been described in terms of the giant squid spotted there on rare occasions: "No human had ever seen an adult giant squid alive, and though they had eyes as big as apples to scope the dark of the ocean, theirs was a solitude so profound they might never encounter another of their tribe" (2). The symbolic significance of the animal world is, of course, found in countless narratives produced in all times and climes. What stands out is the co-existence of the human and the animal world in that section of the Cho Oyu that is governed by the rustic cook and other servants. A saucer of milk and a pile of sweets is placed by the cook to pacify a pair of black cobras living in a hole. The archetypal cook, as his namelessness suggests, lives in harmony with nature believing that "The natural world exists in its own right and other beings have a will, a way of their own and their own stories" (Drengson 20).

However, as in *The Hungry Tide*, we find conflict in this novel also. The ethnic Nepalese Gurkha people are fighting for Gurkhaland, their homeland to be carved out of West Bengal, and Gyan, a Gurkha, gets drawn to the movement. It is a fact that the environmental problems cannot be divorced from social problems like housing and agricultural land. There is the question of

environmental justice and it “gives these positions a clear affinity with environmental justice movements that protest the common association of acute environmental degradation and pollution with poverty” (Gerard 20).

Sai gets emotionally involved with Gyan, her teacher of Nepalese origin, who lives in the poverty-stricken Bong Busti. Transcending the cultural barriers, nature brings them together as it did Ammu and Velutha in Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things*. Against the scenic backdrop of the Delo lake or by the shores of the Teesta river, they tell each other tales of themselves and their families. While nature brings them together thus, the cultural politics creates a gulf between the two lovers. The growing discontent among the Indian Nepalese takes the form of Gorkhaland agitation. Gyan joins this movement and is brainwashed so that he distances himself from Sai and even uses harsh words for her. There is a nasty quarrel between the two. Gyan places his geo-ethnic identity above everything else. He berates his beloved and mocks at the ‘fake English accent’ and ‘powdered faces’ of ‘that fussy pair’ at Cho Oyu. He now looks down upon them as encroachers on his homeland. However, nature does not make any living creature her permanent guest. “Even if a group has been here for several generations, the fact remains that it is true so far as the recorded history goes. One cannot make history a ground for claiming a piece of land in these postmodern times when any identity, leave aside the one based on settlement, is fluid and changeable” (Batra 170).

Suravi Sharma Kumar’s *Voices in the Valley* (2012) is a novel that is suffused with ecological overtones as it highlights the topography, climate, flora and fauna of Assam in a big way. Besides, there is a sharp focus on local customs, food and dress habits, taboos, etc. of the community living in harmony with nature. The writer’s narrative, at least in the early part of the novel, is marked by beautiful pen-pictures:

Millie would observe the kingfisher sitting still on twigs in order to snap up a tiny fish or a tadpole camouflaged in sheets of algae. Dazzling white, the egrets would wade all over the paddy beds with their necks moving back and forth. At a distance from Borkuiigaon, the Burha Luit [Bramhaputra] flowed in melodic ripples sounding like the clinking of bangles on a bride’s heavily ornamented wrists. (42).

Here is a specimen in which the writer reads the language of fish in the leaves: “Some trees were covered by vines, some stood bare, some bore leaves pointed like a singi fish, some spindle-shaped like the kuhi fish, some tiny like the puna fish” (68). The struggle in nature is noted at the minutest level: “Red weaver ants stitched up the leaves of a guava sapling in a corner into enclosures for homes. Drones and bees attacked a thick wasp, that had intruded into their hive, engulfing it in a ball of bees, exterminating it for its audacity” (71).

Some of the images are indeed fresh, as for example, “The reddened river at a distance flowed trembling with the boats and ferries sailing on it butterflied to their reflections” (116) or “...yards away from the highway lounged a green pond with thick lining of moss and with turtles who looked like upturned saucers floating on the water” (38). However, this focus on ecological aspect is not retained throughout the narrative. After some eighty pages, the description takes the form of journalistic report and the issues covered are also of socio-political interest rather than of ecological interest.

Some other novels may briefly be considered here for their ecological interest. Aruni Kashyap has come out with an Assam-specific novel *The House with the Thousand Stories* (2013) which is focussed on the issue of insurgency in Assam. It has nature description in plenty, but it is still a backdrop. She talks of the scent of the earth, the river Brahmaputra, the animals, the insects, etc. essentially to present a pen picture to the reader. True to its name, the novel *Adrift: A Story of Survival at Sea* by V. Sudarshan relates a gripping account of a tourist couple marooned at sea in the company of the crew. The backdrop is the Andaman and Nicobar Islands with their pristine beauty. The novel *Frozen Waves* by S.S. Kumar takes up the Sundarbans region as the backdrop of the thriller that this novel is.

Nature is thus increasingly being focussed upon in contemporary Indian fiction in English. However, this focus is mostly in the form of a backdrop. Dealing with ecological issues in a serious manner the way Amitav Ghosh has done in his novel *The Hungry Tide*, is still a rare phenomenon. As a mode of textual representation, literature does contribute to the construction of both nature and culture. Now, the challenge is to accept the existence of nature in reality, away from textualization. It must be realized that this is not one-sided phenomenon. In fact, it is mutual, “of physical environment (both natural and human built) shaping in some measure the cultures that in some measure continually refashion it” (Buell 2001: 6). There has to be a via media whereby the conflicting demands on both sides can be met.

Wall Derek suggests the remedy:

Economic systems should be infinitely sustainable, cyclical in nature and able to recycle energy and resource inputs. Rather than being based on quantitative measures of gross national product, their goals should be ecologically centred and qualitative. Above all, preservation of, and interaction with nature are vital. The reduction of human wants and the abolition of degrading, alienating work are also sought. Social justice and the creation of a sense of community are equally important; the end goal of a sustainable economy may in a sense be the abolition of economics as a category separate from other areas of life” (Derek 118).

We must not forget the belated realization by a section of the ecologists that economic transformation alone is not adequate and that instead of consumerism, we should be following a kind of 'Green spirituality' (Derek 182). This has, indeed, been the mantra held aloft by ancient Indian culture. But to lead the way in our times, not only the scientists, the politicians or the literary scholars, but mankind at large also has to wake up to thwart the catastrophe knocking at our door.

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