

***QUEST FOR IDENTITY IN THE SELECT POEMS OF
RABINDRANATH TAGORE AND CONTEMPORARY
NORTH-EAST INDIAN
POETS WRITING IN ENGLISH***

*(Thesis submitted to Bodoland University in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Award of Doctor of Philosophy in English)*

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the thesis entitled *Quest for Identity in Rabindranath Tagore and Contemporary Writing in English from North-East India* is a record of bonafide research done by me under the supervision of Prof. P.K.Patra, in the Department of English, Bodoland University during the period of 2013-17 and that it has not been submitted either in full or in part to any other university or institute for the award of any other degree, diploma and title.

Dated the September 2017

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled *Quest for Identity in Rabindranath Tagore and Contemporary Writing in English from North-East India* is a bonafide record of researchwork done by Mrs. Dhanjyoti Gogoi (Regn. No. Final/07 eng /0009 Of 2013-2014), Department of English, Bodoland University, Kokrajhar during 2013-17. Submitted to the Bodoland University in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English, this thesis has not previously formed the basis for the award of any other degree, diploma, associateship, fellowship or other title and that the thesis represents independent and original work on the part of the candidate under my guidance. This is again certified that the candidate has fulfilled the UGC Regulations July 2016 mentioned in the University Ordinance for submission of the thesis.

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PREFACE

Rabindranath Tagore, the first Indian to win the world's highest literary award, the Nobel Prize, is a profound genius. He is a poet, prophet, playwright and philosopher. A large number of writers all over the world have been influenced by him. The present work is a comparative study of quest for identity in Rabindranath Tagore and the poets of Northeast India writing in English and their ecological, ecofeminist and ecomystic insights. Quest for identity being a postcolonial phenomena comprise of several aspects of self, culture, economics, ecology, socio-political affairs, etc. Northeast India being a biodiversity hotspot is ecologically rich and the writers of the region chiefly depict their surrounding, the rich natural environment besides the other aspects of the region.

The Northeast India, being an immensely rich repertoire of some rare species of flora and fauna, and comprising of eight provinces namely Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura is quite rich in biodiversity. This region, with its hills, rivers, valleys, people, myths, legends, rites and rituals, is blessed with a unique ecology. Writing in English from Northeast as a discourse of self-expression took shape casually in the eighties and nineties of the twentieth century. The poets writing in English from this region at present are the first generation of writers. They have attained a legitimized as well as a powerful voice by articulating their senses and sentiments and by focusing on some core issues of the region. The ethos and major concerns of their respective communities are some of the dominant preoccupations of these multi-ethnic poets. Mamang Dai, Yumlam Tana (from Arunachal Pradesh), Bhupati Das, Lakshahira Das, Dayananda Pathak, Umakanta Sarma (from Assam), Robin S. Ngangom, R.K.Madhubir (from Manipur), Anjum Hasan, Desmond L. Kharmawphlang, Esther Syiem, Kynpham Sing Nongkynrih Ananya S. Guha (from Meghalaya), H.Ramdinthari, Mona Zote (from Mizoram), Temsula Ao, Easterine Iralu, Monalisa Changkija and Nini Vingurian Lungalang (from Nagaland), Rajendra Bhandari (from Sikkim) and Bhaskar Roy Barman (from Tripura)

are the representative poets who have been contributing to the multiethnic Indian poetry in English from Northeast.

Rabindranath Tagore is a canonical eco-writer. His works enshrine the the Indian values and the sympathy to nature. The basic Indian ethos teaches us to be compassionate to nature and to be in harmony with it. In Indian culture there has been a tradition of living with nature in a relationship of mutual dependence. The people of the Northeast India also feel an affinity with nature; they believe in a harmonious relationship with nature. The unique ecosystem of the region plays a pivotal role in shaping such a mindset of the people.

Identity crisis and sense of alienation are some of the dominant features of contemporary politics in the Northeast. Racial autonomy, cultural and linguistic conflicts, the problem of insurgency and several dominant racial issues have been ravaging the region. As ecology is an important ingredient of identity, it can play a significant role in bestowing the people of this part of India an identity of their own. And here at this point we mark a powerful note of self-assertion in the works of the aforesaid poets and writers. Their works have many different aspects of the entire ecosystem of Northeast India. They have been celebrating in their works the ecological glory of Northeast with a keen ecological awareness. Although ethnicity is their chief concern as they hail from various ethnic groups, hills, mountains; valleys, people, myths, legends, tribal rites, mystic as well as aesthetic sensibilities, communal violence, and insurgency are also some of the dominant and recurring themes in their works. They use ecology as a tool for acquiring an identity that is unique, legitimized, and also a powerful one.

Writing in English from Northeast, although has attained a remarkable stature, seems to be deprived of proper critical attention in the national level. In the histories of Indian literature in English written by K.R.S. Iyengar and M.K.Naik, the works of the

writers of this region have not been properly mentioned. K.R.S. Iyengar only mentions Prafulladutta Goswami's *Bihu Songs of Assam* (1987:642). M.K.Naik in his *A History of Indian English Literature* (1982) makes no mention of any work by a writer of Northeast India. In his recent book (with Shyamala A. Narayan) entitled *Indian English Literature: 1980-2000* (Delhi: Pencraft International, 2001) he mentions only two works of Northeast Indian writers in English. The present study has critically examined the writing in English from this region comparing them with the works of Tagore and thereby to determine their position in the sphere of Indian writing in English and the canon of ecopolitics. Further, it is noteworthy that abundant ecological resources have been pivotal in shaping the aesthetic sensibilities of these writers. So studying their writing from this ecological perspective may even help in understanding this beautiful region called the Northeast — a land with a geographical as well as psychological entity.

The thesis is mainly be a text-based reading of the works of Rabindranath Tagore and the poets writing in English from the Northeast India along with the help of the principles of eco-criticism, eco-mysticism and eco-feminism.

The introductory chapter is an elaborated study of the recent theories on eco-criticism, eco-mysticism, eco-feminism and question of identity. It further has analyzed different aspects of eco-politics on the basis of these theories and introduced the contributions of Tagore and poets of Northeast India. The second chapter entitled “Major Themes in the Poems of Rabindranath Tagore and the Select Contemporary Northeastern Poets Writing in English” deals with the works of Tagore and writers from the provinces of Northeast India in presenting major themes in their poetry. The third chapter entitled “Matrix of Ecology, Ecofeminism and Mysticism in Poems of Rabindranath Tagore” has analyzed the poems of Rabindranath Tagore in terms of various ecological concepts. The fourth chapter entitled “Ecological and Eco-mystical World in the poems of Northeast Indian Poets Writing in English” has presented

ecocritical analysis of the poems of Northeast poets. The fifth chapter has compared the special features in Rabindranath Tagore and the poets of Northeast. The concluding chapter besides concluding the thesis has defined some key issues of the entire region.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Rabindranath Tagore occupies the most coveted and aspired throne in the realm of Indian literature. A man endowed with the unique distinction of being awarded the first ever Nobel Prize among the Indians for literature, he possesses unflinching and undwindling universal acclaim and admiration, which is undoubtedly eternal. This embodiment of wisdom and perfection was born on 6th May 1861 in the family of the Tagore's of Jarasanko in the heart of Calcutta. While he was blessed with affluent fortune and aristocratic culture, he was always receptive to the captivating appeal of the world of man and Nature, diversity of interests and priorities prevailed in the lives of the ancestors of Rabindranath Tagore. His great grandfather Jayaram Thakur and grandfather Prince Dwarkanath used to dwell in a world of pomp and splendour. But his father Devendranath Tagore was acknowledged for his passion for saintly attributes. So Rabindranath naturally inherited great sense of dignity and penchant for ambition. He was the youngest of the seven sons among fourteen children. He was not allowed to move out of the house like other boys. So when he saw the servants going out to explore the outside world, a sense of envy crept into his heart. The distinct sound of the carriages dashing along the Chitpora Road appealed to him. He regarded this period of life as an unhappy one like the Slave Dynasty in Indian history. He has narrated the story of his early life in two books entitled *MyReminiscences* and *My Boyhood Days*.

Rabindranath was blessed with the privilege of serene atmosphere when his father Devendranath had a house erected at some distance from Bolpur. It was subsequently transformed into Shantiniketan (Abode of Peace). From there he went to Amritsar, where he saw the renowned Sikh temple. He learnt Sanskrit and English from his peerless father. Kalidasa's play *Meghdoot* left an indelible impression on him (Deva 38). Soon his ecstasy in poetry came to the fore.

The story regarding Tagore's education is quite amusing. He had no regular schooling, nor did he go through the usual academic grind. He rated his school life as his “Andamans” (the penal colony for the transportation of life for the convicts) (ibidem 3). The school he attended created a sense of repulsion and exasperation in his heart where pupils had to toil hard for a long time. He did not gain anything in his early school life. So at the age of seventeen, he was sent to London and there, under Professor Henry Morley, he studied for a while in the University of London (ibidem). Rabindranath Tagore had intense disgust for the schools in Calcutta, but one man whom he appreciated and admired highly was Henry Morley of London. He had preserved a very elevated position for Morley in his heart who was interestingly, one of his early teachers. Rabindranath's elder brother Hemendranath made adequate arrangements for the instruction and training of Rabindranath. He was compelled to study science, literature, music and painting even though he was not inclined to do that. Hemendranath was not in favour of teaching advanced courses in History, Geography, Mathematics and Science through the medium of English. Instead he emphasized the need to follow the medium of Bengali. It proved to be a decisive step in Rabindranath's life as he acquired his mother tongue, paid rich dividends later on as he emerged in the elite group of Bengali poets of great magnitude and literary aptitude. Perhaps he would not have scaled the peaks of poetic excellence and greatness, if he was deprived of the wisdom of his mother tongue. The awareness of self-respect, which is one of the characteristic traits of his disposition, was ingrained in him by his brother's insistence of learning Bengali. Rabindranath's forerunners in literature, Michael Madhusudan, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar and Bankim Chandra had given modern Bengali poetry, prose and fiction an enviable position. So the stage was set for him to add new dimensions to Bengali literature. He did not disappoint the anticipation of people as he further enriched it to unimaginable proportions. Rabindranath went to England in 1878 and came back in 1880. He again went to England in 1881 to study law, but changed his intention and came back. No deliberate attempt was made to educate him further. In the meantime, he had showed great promise as a writer. By 1875, at a very young age, his first endeavours in prose and verse began to appear in print. He was powerfully drawn to Indian devotional poetry. His *Sandhya Sangit (Evening Songs)* was received with remarkable appreciation when it was published. He was acclaimed by Bankim Chandra as a potential great. His brother Jyotirindranath and his wife influenced him tremendously at that moment. Rabindranath was fortunate to have a sister-in-law who

was a mother like figure to him. She was not only his companion, but a discerning critic. After the death of Rabindranath's mother in 1875, she took care of him and rescued him from the incorrigible fault of budding writer's vanity and lack of self-criticism. Her death in 1884 left Rabindranath stunned as he confronted death for the first time. His brother's wife reappears in some of the best stories and poems in the poet's imagination. After the demise of Jyotirindranath and his wife, Rabindranath got the opportunity to compare verses in his style. It delineates that the inherent talent of a poet is more important than the restraining influence of a discerning critic to rise into prominence. Among other influences, Viharilal Chakravarti is worth mentioning. Although underrated, this man showed to Tagore and his sister-in-law, genuine lyrical inspiration. Another influence on him was the Vaishnava lyrical poetry, which gave to the poet resilience to follow a virgin path in the field of art and poetry. Rabindranath Tagore was undeniably influenced by the English romanticists Byron, Shelley, Keats, Wordsworth and Victorian masters, Tennyson and Browning. He also treasured profound admiration for Shakespeare, Milton, Sir Thomas Browne and Pope. (Iyengar 100). Tagore was not a voracious reader, but he could create lyrics of astounding quality. The 7000 lines of verse composed before he was eighteen bear the testimony to that fact. What is even more remarkable is that he maintained that eloquence and proliferation for the greater part of his life.

Tagore's life took a new direction in 1883 when he married Mrinalini, a girl of ten years of age in Calcutta. It is quite ironical that a romantic like Tagore tied the matrimonial bond in such an unromantic and desolate manner. But the queer nuptial knot soon yielded success. Mrinalini's presence created a congenial atmosphere for Tagore to explore new heights in literature. Tagore was all incorrigible romantic who did not need any romantic stimulus, what he needed was an antidote and his wife provided just that to him. So, lyrics, plays, stories, novels, and essays ceaselessly flowed from his pen. As his reputation spread to every nook and corner, he also developed diversity in interest. His courage and adaptability were constantly put under the scanner. When he was entrusted with the responsibility of looking after the family estates, he did it quite successfully. But his success was not devoid of criticism, as his methods were deemed unorthodox at the time. During that period of time, he constantly had to visit the villages. He wrote numerous verses and works of prose during that

period and also shared intimate and cordial contact with the people of Bengal who inhabited the villages. He witnessed their joy and sorrow and acquainted himself with their lifestyle by trying to understand them. He derived the theme of many of his poems and short stories from what he learnt amongst them. Tagore brought innovations in the field of education in 1901. He used to pay an occasional visit to Bolpur in the district of Birbhum, where his father in 1863 purchased a vast tract of land. Subsequently, it was named Santiniketan (abode of peace). Here he established Bolpur Brahmacharya Ashram after getting the approval of his father. Ultimately it grew into Viswa Bharati (Deva 7). Tagore shared the same vices with George Bernard Shaw that schools were nothing but prison and days passed at school is penal servitude. Tagore intended to eliminate harassment from education so that the children could be introduced to a pleasant teaching atmosphere where the inherent joy and freedom of art would be in full play. Tagore was a firm believer in freedom and joy. He equally believed in the harmony and unity of all existence. At this time the tragic demise of his wife left him deconsolate with his five children. A series of touching lyrics ensued to commemorate her death and Tagore named his compositions as *Smaran (Remembrance)*. His wife's death was followed by the premature death of his second daughter, Renuka. But despite these setbacks and overwhelming grief, Tagore's invulnerability never dwindled and these unfortunate incidents failed to undermine his spirit.

Tagore's father Maharsi Devendranath Tagore expired in 1905 at the age of eighty seven. In that year Bengal was amidst great social and political turmoil due to the proposed partition of Bengal by Lord Curzon. It led to the Swadeshi Movement and nationwide rage and protest tried to defy the wicked policy of the British Government. Tagore had been mute participant of the National Movement, but now he jumped into it. Tagore was in the frontline of the movement; he delivered lectures in congregations, organized processions and composed a large number of songs, which were sung all over Bengal. Soon it was perceived that difference of opinions existed between Tagore and other politicians. So Tagore alienated himself from the movement and retired to Santiniketan. He considered that 'Swaraj' was not a boon to be begged, it was a right to be obtained. He encouraged his countrymen to leave the British Government to concentrate on nation building work. During that period mystical works like *The King of the Dark Chamber*, *Gitanjali* and *The Post Office* followed from his creative mind.

All these works signify the transition in his life. His youngest child, Samindra died in 1907 and in 1911 the Bangiya Sahitya Parishad celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of Tagore's birthday with great enthusiasm.

Tagore decided to travel Europe to acquaint people with the ideals of his school at Santiniketan and to learn cooperative farming in Denmark. His friends and acquaintances exhorted him to meet men like Rothenstein who treasured great inclination and admiration for his literary work. In 1912, he had a momentary ailment leading to the postponement of his visit to Europe. In May, nevertheless he gained complete recovery and went to England. During this period, he was greeted there as a seer with a universal message. Tagore showed his translations of Bengali compositions to Rothenstein during his visit to England and Rothenstein gave them to W.B. Yeats and many others. He received great acclaim for the charm and originality of his works. The best minds of the day, Southey, the greatest painter of England, W.B. Yeats, the greatest poet of England, A.C. Bradley, the greatest critic of England, *The Times Literary Supplement*, the greatest English journal and a number of other admirers and enthusiasts of poetry expressed genuine appreciation of his poetry (Deva 9). Tagore met C.F. Andrews at the House of Rothenstein and invited him to visit Santiniketan. Subsequently he became Tagore's lifelong friend.

The publication of *Gitanjali* (1912) in English left the English readers bewildered. They were enamoured by the profundity of thought and also by the use of delectable and intoxicating language. The incredible success of *Gitanjali* led to thirteen reprints between March and December 1913. It ensured the publication of other volumes of translation also poetry, drama, fiction, non-fictional prose followed in quick succession and an assorted edition of poems and plays appeared in 1930. In the meantime, he had founded the Viswa Bharati University at Santiniketan in 1920. During his visit to America in 1913 to deliver some address, he got acquainted with Rudolf Eucken, the famous German scholar and a great admirer of Tagore's *Gitanjali*. In June 1913, he came back to England and returned to India in October. The Lectures he delivered in America were published as *Sadhana* by Macmillan, along with *Gardener*, *The Crescent Moon* and *Chitra*. In November, 1913 Tagore received the

information that he had been chosen for the award of Nobel Prize. He was no longer a poet of Bengal alone, but he was acknowledged as a laureate of India and Asia.

As the years went by he became more and more a legendary figure. His flowing beard and delicate white robes gave him a distinct look. He looked more like a monk of the Upanishadic time than a great modern poet. One of the most important incidents in Tagore's life occurred when he met M.K. Gandhi for the first time in 1915. The students and staff of Phoenix school, established by M. K. Gandhi in Transvaal came to visit Santiniketan. Tagore conferred the title 'Mahatma' on M.K. Gandhi and he himself became a Knight in 1915. Tagore visited Japan in 1916, but the wild wake of nationalism there grieved him. His condemnation of the cult of nationalism at the Imperial University, Tokyo and Keio Gijuku University derived immense criticism from the Japanese people. So the enthusiasm of people at his arrival vanished soon.

Tagore's visit to Japan was followed by his second visit to America. In his lectures he vehemently condemned Western nationalism and British rule in India. His condemnation was received with mixed response and reaction. He returned to India in March 1917, visiting Japan on the way back. On return to India, Tagore associated himself with contemporary politics, but soon he left the arena of power game. In May 1918, he was filled with surprise and indignation when he was informed that some Indian revolutionaries wanted to kill him during his stay in America and that his anti-British lectures were sponsored by Germany. In the same month, he suffered another jolt and setback as he lost his eldest daughter. In 1919, Mahatma Gandhi launched his *Satyagraha* Movement against the approval of the Rowlatt Act. Soon unrest and disturbances took place in Punjab. The measures, taken by the British government to suppress disturbances irked Tagore. When General Dyer's order of indiscriminate firing caused a heinous massacre in Jalianawala Bagh in Amritsar, Tagore's heart was filled with shock and disgust. That despicable act of inhumanity ultimately led Tagore to renounce his knighthood. In June 1920, Tagore was greeted by men like Bernard Shaw, Gilbert Murray and Roerich, the Russian painter on his arrival in England. Then he went to France, Belgium and Holland. After receiving warm welcome in these countries, he went to America. On return to Europe, he visited Germany, Sweden and

many other countries. In Germany, his sixtieth birthday was celebrated with great enthusiasm. After his return to India, he delivered a thought-provoking lecture on the confluence of Eastern and Western cultures. On 22nd December 1921, Viswa Bharati was formally inaugurated and this prestigious institution was further honoured by the visit of first visiting Professor Sylvan Levi (Deva 13). Arrangements were made for Tagore to join the nationwide agitation against the British. But he boldly refused it creating a lot of displeasure among people.

In March, 1924, he went to China and Japan and delivered lectures there. After a brief stay of two months in India, he went to South America to attend the centenary celebrations of independence at Peru. But his trip to Beunos Aiares was cancelled due to ill-health. In January 1925, he went to Italy. He delivered lectures in Milan and also visited Venice. He was given a warm welcome and received by the king. He had interviews with Mussolini. He praised Mussolini's personality. But when he went to Switzerland from Italy, he met Romain Rolland and some other friends. From their intimation, he realized that he was victimized as a representative of Fascism in Italy. Tagore still liked Mussolini's personality, but he discarded Fascism which was responsible for many atrocities. From Switzerland he went to many places like England, Norway, Germany, the Balkans, Greece and Egypt. In April, 1927 he returned to Santiniketan, but soon departed to Malaya, Java, Bali and Siam and was away from India for four months. Tagore was acknowledged as a singer and literary artist, but he was also a painter. In May, 1932, he inaugurated an exhibition of pictures in Paris, followed by exhibitions in Copenhagen, Moscow and other places. Tagore's tour of Soviet Russia is significant where he received a warm welcome. He applauded the struggle of Russian people to eradicate ignorance and poverty. But the methods of force and lack of criticism to achieve their purpose were criticized by him.

He returned to India in February 1931. Enthusiasm and arrangements were in their peak to celebrate his seventieth birthday. They are known as Rabindra Jayanti Celebrations and were held in December 1931 and January 1932. Except Shaw, all the greatest men of letters attended this celebration. But Gandhi's arrest marred the event, as it had to be stopped abruptly. The furore caused by Ramsay Macdonald's communal

award compelled Tagore to intervene. He raised his voice in protest and went to Poona where Mahatma Gandhi was fasting in jail. Mahatma broke his fast on signing the Poona Pact. Tagore presided over the inaugural meeting of the centenary celebrations of the death of Raja Ram Mohan Ray whom he always held in reverence.

Tagore visited many places in India in the last few years of his life. He avoided foreign tours due to declining health. The universities of Dacca, Benaras and Hyderabad conferred on him the Doctorate Degrees. His deteriorating health could not perturb him as he continued with his literary creations. On 7th August 1940, the University of Oxford arranged a special convocation where Rabindranath Tagore was honoured as Doctorate of Literature. The poet fell ill in September 1940, but recovered after an anxious period. Again he had an attack of illness in June 1941 and it turned out to be a fatal one. He had to be moved to Calcutta for an operation and it was there he took his last breath on 7 August 1941. The poet had composed an apt song for the event.

In front lies ocean of peace,
 Launch the bat, Helmsman,
 You will be the comrade ever
 May the mortal bonds perish,
 May the vast universe take him in its arms,
 And may fie know in his fearless heart
 The Great Unknown, (qtd in Iyengar 8-9)

His Aesthetic World

Rabindranath Tagore stands out as the most versatile great of his time. His prolific and wide range of writing left no genre of literature unattempted. Poems, novels, plays, short stories, various kinds of prose and miscellaneous writings followed

ceaselessly from his fertile heart and mind. Although he left no genre of literature untouched, he is mostly acclaimed for his achievement as a poet.

Tagore's poetry is not static, but it is evolutionary. There seems to be conspicuous development of thought and diversity in his whole poetic career. The development of Tagore's poetry can be traced at the various stages of life. In Pre-*Gitanjali* period, poems like *The Awakening of the Waterfall* and *Evening Songs* are quite significant. Both the poems shun gloom and despondency and a sense of joy prevails. Tagore was twenty-one years of age when he composed the poem, *Evening Songs*. The next two poems, *Picture and Songs* and *Sharps and Flats* deal with the theme of the newly awakened consciousness of reality. Some poems of Tagore deal with the social problems of the day. 'Basundhare' in *Sonar Pari* is one of his nature poems of this period. It is not its mere remembrance of communion with nature, but also fills longing to dwell amidst nature. Though Tagore appreciated the calmness and tranquility of nature, some poems also depict the destructive aspect of nature. "Barsha-Shesh" and 'Sea-Waves' which appeared in the book entitled *Kalpna* and *Manasi* respectively treat the terrible aspect of nature. Tagore has depicted nature in all aspects. The first stage of his poetic career abounds in natural phenomena with all its ingredients.

The initial period is followed by the most eventful period of Tagore's life. Whatever he wrote during this time was overshadowed by the magnum opus *Gitanjali*. His poetic talent and exposure reached new heights as he was acclaimed all over the world. *Gitanjali* is a collection of lyrics on God, Man and Nature undefined by his romantic longing for a communion with the divine. The word *Gitanjali* means an offering of songs. Its central theme is the realization of the divine through self-purgation and service to humanity.

The *Gitanjali* songs are mainly poems of Bhakti in the great Indian tradition. Tagore's poems own their inspiration to the Upanishadic doctrine, which envisages the world and entire creation as having been born out of joy, residing in joy and returning

to joy at last. The whole book is endowed with rich poetry of great significance. It leaves readers in a fit of contemplation. Even the opening lines seem to create a palpable influence on people:

Thou hast made me endless, such is thy
pleasure. This frail vessel thou emptiest
again and again, and fillest it ever with
fresh life.(Tagore,*Gitanjali* 1)

Gitanjali is a collection of hundred and three poems. It is ornamented with simplicity and sublimity. Lofty ideas and noble sentiments are mingled with striking images to provide solidity to the work. *Gitanjali* was originally composed in Bengali, but Tagore transcreated his original poems into English. So the English *Gitanjali* is not a literal and comprehensive translation of Bengali *Gitanjali*. The English poems are true translations, expressing the main ideas of the Bengali poems, which may be regarded as fresh compositions.

When *Gitanjali* was published in 1912, the whole world including the Westerners was struck with wonder. This collection of innovative poems rendered them speechless in admiration. That is why aptly in 1913 Tagore received the Nobel Prize for this laudable and peerless work. It compelled all the greatest men of letters to marvel and contemplate of his new set of ideas and sentiments. Besides *Gitanjali*, the other poetic works of Tagore also are full of powerful romantic and spiritual expressions, and enthusiasm. Though the glory and mystery of nature are abundantly exposed in his lines, he brings new experiences to the readers with his words deftly crafted endowed with divinity.

The Crescent Moon is a book for children and those adults who call still leap in joy and wonderlike an innocent child. Like Wordsworth and Walter de la Mare, Tagore too found in children a mystic quality. He found in them beauty, innocence, humour, charity and a kind of ancient wisdom and he celebrated these qualities in song.

The Gardener stands next only to *Gitanjali*. It is one of the most wonderful collections ever produced in English. Almost all the poems deal with sheer love, which is worldly as well as divine, though it is hard to distinguish in Tagore's poetry. All the emotions of love like agony, despair, delight, and fulfilment are woven together into a garland of memorable songs. Quite a few of the poems and songs in *The Gardener* are seen to be as good as the best in *Gitanjali*. Yet the collection as a whole is devoid of intensity and organic unity which is reminiscent of the great work.

Fruit Gathering (1916), *Lover's Gift*, *Crossing*, and *the Fugitive and other poems* (1921) also include some of Tagore's best lyrics. Some of the poems in *Crossing* seem to have been derived from *Gitanjali* volume. Tagore's greatest single poem *Urvashi* made an appearance in a curtailed version in the *Fugitive* volume. There is a reference to *Urvashi* in one of the poems of *Lover's Gift* as the dancer at the court of paradise. To Tagore, *Urvashi* is a beautiful woman who is goddess and seductress.

The Child (1931) is unique among Tagore's poems because it was first written in English and later translated into Bengali as *Sishutirtha*. When Mahatma Gandhi started his Dandi March and firmly stated that he would not come back to Sabarmati again, Christ's 'passion' coalesced in the poet's imagination. Tagore composed *The Child* in the course of a single night. The poem is in ten sections and it expresses the view that man in himself holds the key to his own redemption. This is really an audacious and innovative poem, which needs an elevated position. During the last decade of his life, Tagore still tried to experiment and explore new concepts and new forms of verse. He published the books of prose poems, *Punascha*, *Sesh-Saptak*, *Shyamali and Patraput*. In these autobiographical writings, realistic comments get intermingled. Towards the end of his life, Tagore again became a singer, though a sad music of humanity loomed large

on the poems. He composed *Prantik* (*Borderline*, 1938), *Rogsajya* (*On the Sick-Bed*, 1940), *Arogya* (*Recovery*, 1941) and the posthumous *Sesh Lekha* (*Last Poems* 1942). These poems of last stage in Tagore's life are underrated because of their declining poetic appeal. They are prone to bitter criticism from various critics. Here, Tagore's fecundity and creativity seem to have lost even their last elements.

Rabindranath Tagore is recognized worldwide as the author of his immortal creation, *Gitanjali*. He remains one of the greatest ever poets to explore the genre of poetry. But the immense bulk of prose writing he has left behind also epitomizes his excellence and achievement as a successful writer of prose. There are the novels, the short stories and plays which are in a different category altogether.

His creative craft

Rabindranath Tagore's image bears a close resemblance to a luminary in the literary firmament. He stands out conspicuously as a spontaneous poet, an accomplished playwright, a delightful novelist and a precise writer of short stories. But all these attributes of his literature are endowed with the supremacy of his art. Tagore's various forms of art are perceived in his depiction of love imagery. With immaculate concept of beauty he had close affinity with Nature. One of the major forms of art in Tagore's poetry is the depiction of love. The theme of love exists everywhere; it is ornamented with authenticity because of the poet's personal experiences. Love provides him joy and fills his entire being with admiration for beauty. In his poems, Tagore is found to have been associated with various forms of love. The love of a mother for her child, the love of a husband for his wife, love of a lover for his beloved and love of a devotee for his God- all find expression in Tagore's works. Tagore's early volumes of verse *Kadi O Kamal* and *Manasi* contain his bold proclamation of personal love on a real physical plane which even thrilled his critics. His *Gitanjali* celebrates the victory of divine love over worldly love and attraction. Due to Tagore's concern for Victorian ethical bias, the profound influence of his father, the restrictions imposed by his brother,

he was always in ascetic recoil. The theme of love and womanhood invariably got transformed into a desire of communion with the divine.

In *Gitanjali*, Tagore gives full vent to his artistic and lyrical genius in portraying the undwindling love for God through amorous imagery. Tagore is a firm believer that even the forms of Love are the instances of the most glorious love, that is, love for God. Tagore's magnum opus, *Gitanjali* comprises a series of abundant imagery which reveals his divine love. In the very first poem of his peerless creation, we have the image of a flute. The poet compares himself to a little flute and he sings in the company of the Almighty who is the great musician. The poet is like a living flute which feels ecstatic at the touch of its lord:

The little flute of a reed thou hast carried over hills and
dales, and breathed through it melodies eternally new.
(Ibid.)

Tagore's obsession for divine love runs up to the last poem of *Gitanjali*. In this poem he even surrenders everything in pursuit of divine love. Like *Gitanjali*, *The Gardener*, *Fruit Gathering*, *Lover's Gift* also contain instances of Tagore's passion for love. The *Gardener* is an epitome of outstanding sentiments of love. Commenting on it K. R.S Iyengar says, "It is in the main a feast of love poetry —with a human rather than of divine slant, though with a poet like Tagore the borderline between the two is apt to be tantalizingly indistinct".(IWE 116)

Tagore's poetry is not only a depiction of sacred love, but also is also presented as a warm human passion which thrives in physical attraction. It is not a feeble sensation, but a mighty emotion which determines the outcome of various human relations. Like his treatment of love, the concept of beauty and affinity with nature are also the keynotes of Tagore's art. All sorts of beauties and charms of earth and the sky,

moon, and the stars, the sun and the sunrise, trees and hills, birds and flowers attracted his poetic Imagination. (Abidi 109)

Tagore's concept of beauty is largely attached to his affinity with nature. Apart from physical and divine beauty, his works are blessed with natural beauty. In his passionate and profound love of nature, Tagore can be put alongside the great Romantic poet, William Wordsworth. His collection, *The Gardener* contains some notable nature poems. In these poems, he depicts beautiful images of flowers, honey bees, the chirping of the birds, filling of the pitcher at the fountain, the green and yellow rice fields and various other elements of nature.

To sum up Tagore was an artist par excellence. Without his excellent skills he would not have been the great literary genius as he is acknowledged today. He enriched the modern Indian life in several ways by instilling modern outlook in the Indian minds. As such Mahatma Gandhi rightly hailed him as "the Great Sentinel" (Naik 58). Rabindranath is basically a mystic, patriotic, romantic and spiritual poet. The poets of Northeast India are basically romantic and some of them are mystics and spiritual. Northeast is a region of natural bounty and most of the poets are nature poets and during the postcolonial times they are emotional about their region and are all busy in showcasing their region and its glory to the rest of the World. As Rabindranath during the colonial era showcased the greatness of India to the World and his *Gitanjali* genuinely exposed the greatness of India to the Western World. Romantic and mystical strains of Rabindranath and the poets of Northeast India though diverse, yet are amply similar to be compared.

Northeast India and Poets of Northeast India Writing in English

Comprising of eight provinces namely Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura, with huge cultural, linguistic,

ethnic, or religious diversities among them, the North East part of India, known as 'the Northeast' has a geographical area of 2.55 lakh square kilometers. This region which is 7.8 per cent of the country's total area is linked to the rest of the country by a narrow corridor and it shares two per cent only of its boundary with India, and the remaining ninety eight per cent is shared with the international borders of Bangladesh, Bhutan, Myanmar, China and Nepal. The region is as an anthropological museum is a melting pot where the brown and the yellow races meet, where the tradition and culture of different tribes and ethnic groups mingle, and where there is a rich storehouse of different languages and dialects of these multi-ethnic people. The tribes here are still following the traditional animistic faith even though religions like Hinduism (particularly in the states of Assam, Manipur, Tripura and Sikkim), Christianity (in the hills of Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland in large scale and other provinces in small scale), Buddhism (mostly in Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim) and Islam (particularly in the state of Assam and other parts of the region) have made a dominant presence in the region.

Quite rich in biodiversity as an immensely rich archive of some rare species of flora and fauna, the Northeast India is a biodiversity hotspot mingling two major biodiversity hotspot of the world. The region contains more than one-third of the country's total biodiversity.

This region as a rich faunal diversity with estimated 3624 species of insects, 50 molluscs, 236 fishes, 64 amphibians, 137 reptiles, 541 birds and 160 mammalian species is a major one of the 34 biodiversity hotspots of the world with about 8000 varieties of flowering plants, 700 varieties of orchids, 58 bamboos, 64 citrus, 28 conifers, 500 mosses, 700 ferns and 728 lichen species (Barik et al, 200). The other biodiversity significance of the region are that (i) more than 60% of their geographical area under forest cover (ii) broadly classified into six major forest types namely, tropical wet evergreen forests, subtropical forests, temperate forests, tropical moist deciduous forests, tropical semi evergreen forests, and alpine forests there are fifty one types of forests, (iii) six types of important vegetations out of all India nine types are available in this region, (iv) Of the 1500 endangered floral species, 800 are reported

from NE India (Hegde 2), (v) a part of the great tropical rainforest that spreads out from the foothills of the Himalayas to the tip of the Malaysian Peninsula and the mouth of the Mekong River. (vi)The region with its mountains, hills, rivers, valleys, people, myths, legends, rites and rituals is blessed with a unique ecology.(Das 2) Whereas four hundred fifty tribes live in the whole of the country in North East only two hundred twenty five reside. (Myers 853). All these tribes have rich oral and cultural traditions. The oral history of these tribes “tells of ancestors from the shadowy past, from mountains steeped in mist and romance, from lands far away, of snake gods and princesses, epic battles and great warriors” (Hazarika xviii). Besides having rich oral literatures, some states like Assam and Manipur in particular, have literary histories that date back to past centuries to several ruling dynasties. Writing in English from Northeast as a new literature and discourse of self-expression took shape casually in the eighties and the nineties of the twentieth century. The writers writing in English from this region at present are the first generation of writers. They already have attained a legitimate as well as a powerful voice by articulating their senses and sentiments and by focusing on some of the core issues of the region. The ethos and milieu of their respective communities are some of the dominant preoccupations of these multi-ethnic writers. Tilottama Misra in her *The Oxford Anthology of Writings from North-East India: Poetry and Essays* says about the nature of Writing in English from India’s Northeast that an intense sense of awareness of the cultural loss and recovery that came with the negotiation with other cultures is a recurrent feature of the seven North-Eastern states. Each small community or linguistic group has responded through its oral or written communication to the encounters with the majoritarian cultures from either mainland India or from outside the borders of the country, in its own distinctive manner. (Misra 3). Since the eight states of the region hugely vary from each other in tradition, culture, language, and religion, it might seem to be an injustice to homogenize literatures from this region. But in spite of this diversity, it is possible to locate some common grounds, some shared values and concerns of these writers. Identity crisis and a sense of alienation are some of the dominant features of contemporary politics in the Northeast. Racial autonomy, cultural and linguistic conflicts and the problem of insurgency have been ravaging the region. These are some of the recurrent themes in these writers that bind them in one single thread. Besides issues like identity crisis, search for roots, self-assertion, or claims for a political space, it is the ecology of the region, and an ecological concern that predominantly seem to unite these multi-ethnic

writers in a common platform. The works of the writers in English from India's Northeast have many different aspects of the entire ecosystem of the region. The writers celebrate the ecological glory of Northeast with a keen ecological awareness. Although ethnicity is their chief concern as they hail from various ethnic groups, mountains, hills, valleys, people, myths legends, tribal rites, mystic as well aesthetic sensibilities, communal violence, insurgency are also some of the dominant and recurring themes in their works. They seem to use ecology, in a conscious way, as a tool for acquiring an identity - an identity which is unique, legitimate and a powerful one. It is felt that the unique ecology of the region has been pivotal in shaping an aesthetic sensibility of these writers.

Mamang Dai, Yumlam Tana (Arunachal Pradesh), Bhupati Das, Lakshahira Das, Dayananda Pathak, Umakanta Sarma, Rupanjali Baruah, Pradip Kumar Patra (Assam), Robin S Ngangom, R. K. Madhubir, R. K. Bhubonsana, Kunjarani Longjam Chanu, Yumlembam Ibomcha, Thangjam Ibopishak, Raghu Leishangthem, Memchoubi, Saratchand Thiyam, Ilabanta Yumnam (Manipur), Kynpham Sing Nongkynrih, Desmond L Kharmawphlang, Tarun Bhartiya, Pijush Dhar, Ananya S Guha, Anjum Hasan, Paul Lyngdoh, Donboklang Ryntathiang, Almond D Syiem, Esther Siyem, Bevan L Swer, Indari Siyem Warjri ((Meghalaya), Mona Zote, H. Ramdinthari (Mizoram), Temsula Ao, Monalisa Changkija, Easterine Iralu, Nini Lungalang (Nagaland), Rajendra Bhandari (Sikkim), Bhaskar Roy Barman, Niranjana Chakma, Kalyanbrata Chakraborti, Kritibas Chakraborty, Sefali Debbarma, Chandra Kanta Murasingh, Pijush Routh and Gambhini Sorokkhaibam (Tripura) are some of the representative poets who have been contributing to the multi-ethnic Indian Poetry in English from Northeast.

Writing in English from Northeast has attained a remarkable stature and in spite of all critical works done in this field, there is scarcity of necessary criticism. Historians like K. R. S. Iyengar and M. K. Naik have not focused much on this region. Though K. R. S. Iyengar mentions only Praphulladutta Goswami's *Bihu Songs of Assam* (Iyengar *IWE* 642), M. K. Naik in his *A History of Indian English Literature* (1982) has not mentioned of any work by a writer from Northeast India. Another book by him (with

Shyamala A. Narayan) entitled *Indian English Literature: 1980-2000* (2001) mentions only two writers from India's Northeast. The present work is planned to critically examine writing in English from this region and to make an attempt to determine the position of the writers in the sphere of Indian writing in English and their attempt in search for identity along with the great poet Rabindranath Tagore's exploration of Indian ethos and bounty of nature proving his great talent and love for nature and the mystical overtones in his works. Rabindranath Tagore and the poets of Northeast are basically nature poets and awareness of environmental degeneration is visible in their works. Hence their works are discussed through the lens of ecological perspectives and the said poets are found to search for their identity through their exploration of nature sympathizing nature through the ecological perspectives as the selected poets have exposed strong sentiments against the exploitation of nature.

It is felt that abundant ecological resources have been pivotal in shaping the aesthetic sensibilities of these writers. So it is hoped that studying their writing from an ecological perspective may even help in understanding this colourful, mesmerizing land called the Northeast India— a land, which is a great geographical as well as a cultural entity with abundant ecological resources.

The work has examined the aspects of ecopolitics entailing ecomysticism, ecofeminism and the like in the works of select writers are the most representative ones among those writers who write in English, or whose works have been translated into English. A close reading reveals that varied aspects of ecopolitics are available in the works of these writers. This is mainly a text-based reading by application of the various principles of ecopolitics, ecomysticism and ecofeminism.

ASPECTS OF ECOPOLITICS: Ecology and Ecocriticism

Ecology

The word 'Ecology' derived from the Greek words *oikos* and *logos* meaning 'household' and 'knowledge' respectively is a very significant domain of critical idiom and theory in current usage. The term coined by the German biologist Ernst Haeckel in 1866, is defined as the science of the relationship of the organisms to the environment. Ecology in literary criticism is the critical study of the relationship and interdependence between each and every life form of the environment and related concepts and sympathy on the environment invading man's oppression of the nature and the ways to thwart the the oppression.

There are a number of philosophical concepts based on ecological principles. Ecological thinking has been there for millenniums, but ecology as a critical and cultural principle has developed gradually. The theory of Ecology and ecological movements are very often used in connection with the 'green' movement. These theories or philosophies use the word 'ecology' in a much looser sense than the scientific. This practice— somewhere between seeing culture as manifestation of ecology and using ecology as metaphor for culture—is common in ecocriticism (Kerridge 536). A look into some of the ecological philosophies brings to light this ecology-culture relationship.

Deep Ecology

Realizing the intrinsic value of nature is basic principle of Deep Ecology. The basic tenet of Deep Ecology advocates the same right for the living environment as enjoyed by humanity to live, grow, flourish and develop. The global ecological crises

have led to the concept of emergence of the sense of Deep Ecology which calls for a profound transformation in the traditional ecological paradigm entailing new metaphysical, epistemological, religious, psychological, sociopolitical and ethical principles. The theory and concept call for a new ontology (science of being/becoming), a new epistemology (way of knowing), a new psychology (idea of self), and a new metaphysics (assumptions about the world) (Merchant 92). Deep Ecology opposes the anthropocentric idea of development at the cost of environmental degradation. Such developments have already posed a great threat to the ecology of our planet. To present a critique of the anthropocentric concept of development, which is primarily a European concept; Deep Ecologists refer to the spiritual and philosophical values imbibed in the Native American, Buddhist, Jain or Hindu traditions. As a part of the intricate web of the entire ecosystem, the development of humanity is possible only through a peaceful co-existence with each and every organism (Naess 187). Deep Ecology opposes the attitude of human beings of treating the earth as a resource to be exploited for their welfare and so called development. As human beings are just a part of the ecological web like any other creature, and not masters, they cannot claim superiority to any other object in the ecosystem. Arne Naess has set the principles for Deep Ecology philosophizing man's relationship with nature.

The four tenets of Deep Ecology as proposed by Ramachandra Guha are (i) Deep Ecology argues that the environmental movement must shift from an anthropocentric to a biocentric perspective (ii) it focuses on the preservation of wilderness, (iii) it has a universal significance as it was practiced also in the ancient non-Western spiritual traditions, and (iv) it sees itself as the spiritual, philosophical and political vanguard of world environmentalism. (Guha 282)

Shallow Ecology

To preserve and protect nature against further depletion fearing the worst consequence and start working towards reviving the past status and restoring the loss is named as Shallow Ecology. The Shallow Ecology movement tends to talk only about resources for humans, whereas Deep Ecology talks about resources for each species. Shallow Ecology fights against pollution and resource depletion. Its central concern is the health and affluence of the people in the developed countries. Practitioners of Shallow Ecology look at the narrower problems of population growth, environmental pollution, and resource depletion from the viewpoint of science and human affairs. Such views may seem to be limited as the basis of such views is anthropocentric assumptions that seem to fail to infuse nature with an intrinsic value of its own.

It advocates preservation of environment for the benefit of people, especially the people of the developed countries. Unlike Deep Ecology it places human beings at the centre of any ecological discourse and hence it puts utmost importance on their wellbeing. Shallow Ecology believes that saving the world is necessary only because of the reason that it sustains human life. Any object in the ecosystem is to be preserved only if it is of obvious value to humans. For example, preservation of wilderness is necessary as it is a resource for the human world, or the rainforests are to be preserved as they provide much needed oxygen to human beings. Considering these notions it seems that Shallow Ecology is self-centered in comparison to Deep Ecology and can be labelled as anthropocentric.

Social Ecology

Social Ecology is the science that deals with the social and natural relationship in an ecosystem. It focuses on the relations of production and the hegemony of the state in reproducing those relations. It has primarily an anthropocentric ethic which is

modified by ecological and dialectical science. It envisages a world in which the fundamental human needs are fulfilled through an environmentally sustainable economic restructuring. It advocates a science with social values. It seeks a total transformation on the economic basis. It supports an ecologically-based development policy that uses resources in a sustainable way.

Developed by Murray Bookchin in the 1960s this philosophy holds the view that the present ecological crisis originates from the hierarchical political and social systems which are essentially dominating in nature. Social Ecology argues that it should be kept in mind that the present ecological crisis is not only due to natural calamities, and catastrophes created by human beings, but also has other important aspects like political, economic, social, cultural, ethnic or gender conflicts. In the framework of Social Ecology “the very notion of the domination of nature by man stems from the very real domination of human by human” (Bookchin 65). This pace of this domination, which is the product of the society, accelerates under capitalism.

Radical Ecology

Radical Ecology empowers people to make changes for a new ecological ethic. It can be termed as the cutting edge of social ecology. It emerges from human beings’ profound sense of crisis in the urbanized world. It puts domination of nature and domination of human beings in the name of race, sex, class, etc. in an equal level. This movement pushes social and ecological systems toward new patterns of production, reproduction and consciousness that will improve the quality of human life and the natural environment. (Merchant, *Radical Ecology 2*)

Spiritual Ecology

Propounded by a priest and professor of Religious Education, Matthew T. Fox, Spiritual Ecology has four paths like: *Via Positiva*, *Via Negativa*, *Via Creativa* and *Via Transformativa*. *Via Positiva* is the experience of the Divine in terms of delight, awe, and wonder at being present in the world; it involves the institution that creation is a blessing, and response of gratitude. *Via Negativa* is the experience of the darkness, deprivation, suffering, and pain. These two kinds of experiences lead to a rebirth of creativity and it is the *Via Creativa* that involves identifying new ecological virtues for living such as vegetarianism, recycling, relearning the sacredness of nature, redefining creation through political action, and making new rituals to celebrate sacred places, times, and being in nature. *Via Transformativa* is the transformation to a more compassionate society in which all beings love one another. (Fox 228).

Rational Ecology

Rational Ecology is the theoretical framework of ecological rationality that emphasizes on the role of human beings' rationality in preserving the environment and maintaining ecological sustainability. Ecological rationality ascertains "the capability of ecosystems consistently and effectively to provide the good of human life support." (Dryzek 36)

According to the principles of Rational Ecology, human beings are to find out a mechanism to preserve the ecosystem, and it is their rationality that would determine the nature and scope of this mechanism. There have been a number of social choices as adopted by human civilization for its survival. But Rational Ecologists are of the opinion that these social choices have their limitations in attaining ecological rationality.

Eco-criticism

Eco-criticism is a major critical praxis of the current in the domain of literary criticism. Prominent US eco-critic William Rueckert used the term ‘eco-criticism’ for the first time by in his essay “Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism” in 1978. The theory is otherwise being called as ecopoetics, environmental literary criticism, or green cultural studies. These titles for ecocriticism are assigned because of the various objectives of critical studies on the debilitating environment of the modern and post-industrial times. Ecocriticism as a portmanteau term is a blend of ecological and criticism and is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment (Glotfelty and Fromm xviii). It is based on the connection between human culture and the entire ecosphere.

Taking an earth-centered approach to literary studies ecocriticism is based on the fundamental premise that human culture is connected to the physical world having a strong and meaningful interaction between them. The premise of ecocriticism is motivated with an awareness that the actions of human civilization has brought the environment of the planet to a point of no return, where there is a constant threat of an ecocide.

Feminist criticism has been a major influence in the growth and development of ecocriticism. Feminist theorist Elaine Showalter shows three stages in the development of feminist criticism (Showalter 10-12). Cheryll Glotfelty proposes three stages in ecocriticism: The first stage in feminist criticism, as shown by Showalter, is the “image of women” stage. It is concerned with the representation of women in canonical literature. Similarly, the first stage of ecocriticism studies the representation of nature. The second stage of feminist criticism deals with the function of consciousness where literature is rediscovered, reissued, reconsidered and restudied. Likewise, the second stage of ecocriticism is a kind of a re-evaluation, where a given literary text is restudied in order to find out the place of nature as well as the nature of place in it. The third

stage of feminist criticism, as identified by Showalter, is the theoretical phase; and in ecocriticism also the third stage tries to theorize different power-relations in terms race, ethnicity, gender etc. (Glotfelty xvii). Recent developments in the field of ecocriticism show that it is not at all an ‘interdisciplinary study’, or it is not merely a study on ‘nature writing’, but it is an essential component of literary studies.

Eco-mysticism

The words of the poets are bold and as passionate beings the poets explore realities of great mystical heights. Sympathizing nature through the ages the poets have mystified the role of nature. Hence the term ‘eco-mysticism’ is very significant. Eco-mysticism may be defined as ecological mysticism or living ecologically like a mystic’s way of life. Mysticism as a belief is the union with and absorption into the Almighty/Deity / the Absolute. It is a spiritual apprehension of knowledge inaccessible to the intellect which can be attained through contemplation and self-surrender. It is also a vague or ill-defined religion or spiritual belief, especially associated with a belief in the occult. Mysticism “is the art and science of living perfectly; it is the self-knowledge that subsumes the knowledge of the world. It is the quest for and the union with the absolute” (Paranjape 1). Further, “it is the concern with the nature of the ultimate reality. It includes both means and ends, both the goal and the way” (ibidem). The major terms in the aforesaid definition like “Absolute”, “ultimate reality” are the parts of the cosmos/ecology. So ecological mysticism implies the art/science of living perfectly ecologically and earning the self-knowledge required for the said purpose. The spiritual ecology/creation spirituality can be considered as same as Eco-mysticism. Eco-mysticism/Spiritual ecology has four aspects or it is of four types like: *Via Positiva*, *Via Negativa*, *Via Creativa* and *Via Transformativa* which have been discussed earlier in spiritual ecology.

The concept of Eco-mysticism has been there since ancient times. Mystifying nature and man’s relationship with nature is divine. Since time immemorial human

civilization has been in deep attachment with nature. It has been worshipping and nurturing nature and has been living with inter-dependence. But due to the increase of human population, industrialization and rapid urbanization there seems to arise some loop-holes in this age-old bond. In order to meet the challenges posed by these modern phenomena human beings started to exploit and dominate nature. Spiritual Ecology opposes this very concept of dominance.

Creation Spirituality is a way of living with nature with partnership and reverence to nature instead of exploitation and dominance. It is a concept that unifies body and spirit, arts and science; that inspires people, irrespective of class, caste, creed, community, religion, race and sex, to see themselves in terms of the entire cosmology; that emphasizes on eco-centrism instead of anthropocentrism. (Fox 229)

Eco-feminism

Eco-feminism is one of the significant ecological and feminist movements emerged in the 1970s. An increasing consciousness of the relationship between women and nature primarily resulted in the advent of this movement. It draws a parallel between the domination of women and the domination of nature by the patriarchal society. Arising out of the struggle of women to sustain themselves, their families and their communities this movement advocates for environmental protection as well as protection of women, preservation of indigenous cultures, traditional values, sustainable development and other such issues that can bring a social change. It views that racism, classism, and sexism are interconnected and liberation of women cannot be fully achieved without the liberation of nature and vice versa. It begins with the assumption that cultural texts construct particular notions of 'nature', and, therefore, literary, visual and other representations of nature are reflections of an age's views and treatment of nature. It links between literary studies and environmental discourse and observes the effects of such discourses on culture.

Ecofeminism challenges these dualities and seeks to acknowledge value and honour women's biological particularity and affirms women as subjects and makers of history. This understanding is crucial in the transformation of feminism. Ecofeminism believes that there is a deep-rooted connection between women and nature.

Eco-politics

Eco-politics includes various aspects of ecology, biodiversity, eco-mysticism, ecofeminism and eco-sophy. Checking destruction and degeneration of ecology, mystifying its existence and providing its role in upholding the peace and prosperity of humanity are the subjects covered in Eco-politics. Human beings are an integral part of the world. The planet we live in is full of wonder, mystery and exquisite beauty. It is the responsibility of human beings to maintain the unique ecology of our planet. But owing to various destructive practices by human beings in the name of development and technological advancement, the ecology of the earth is presently under a tremendous threat. The present ecological crisis is leading to political, economic, and social crisis for human civilization. Known as also Green Politics, it is playing a vital role in the global ecological scenario through various Green Movements.

Illegal Immigration, Population Explosion and Economic Imbalance

Since time immemorial North East India has been rich in everything. As a biodiversity hotspot has nature's bounty. It is rich in minerals, water resources, agricultural produces and several other aspects. As the statistics given before shows, its climate is healthy, populace mild and loving by nature and they have been in plenty from time immemorial being protected by nature. Of late after the political turmoil of the main land India, North East region has also badly affected after 1947 and again after the creation of Bangladesh. Illegal migration of refugees from Bangladesh and other neighbouring countries have posed threat to the identity of various provinces of the

region. The population explosion in this region has mainly been due to illegal migration and this has caused economic imbalance also. These threats to the identity of the ethnic diversity of the region has aroused awe and anguish in the general public and the same has been diversely reflected in the writings of the poets of the region.

Regionalism and Secessionism

Identity crisis being an anguish of the mass the region has profusely been faced with narrow mindsets of regionalism and separatism. This is desperate move of the public that being separated from the larger province they will have their better identity and cultural and economic well-being. Hence demands for separate homelands, autonomous councils and ideas of self-determination have come up profusely disturbing the political stability of the region and the same has been reflected in the poetry of the poets of the various provinces.

Insurgency

Insurgency has been a chronic malady of the region. There are so many insurgent outfits with so many demands and much loss to life and property of so many has been caused. Though identity is one of the causes, there are innumerable desperate issues and region is very badly obsessed to address the issues which have remained unsolved so far.

The aforementioned discussion on ecological, eco-mystic and ecofeminist principles will be used as the basic tools for analyzing the works of Rabindranath Tagore and the chosen authors from various provinces of Northeast India. Rabindranath Tagore is a foremost Indian mystic and romantic and he spent several years of his life in Tripura and most of the poets of Northeast India have also drawn inspiration from his

works. In his mystic and romantic quest of the worldly realities he has contributed profusely to the making of Indian ecological literatures. The Northeasterners are eco-conscious by nature from time immemorial. The travelers from abroad in various ages have appreciated the ecology of the region. Huen Tsang's account of Kamrup is a strong proof of it and even the Western missionaries and travelers have made profuse appreciation of the ecological glory and mysteriousness of Northeast India.

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CHAPTER II

Major Themes in the Poems of Rabindranath Tagore and the Select Contemporary Northeastern Poets Writing in English

Besides ecological themes, there are several other issues which are available in the poetry of Rabindranath Tagore and poets of Northeast India. These themes are mostly related to the contemporary problems of the society, mysticism, several religious, economic, political and cultural issues. The writings related to the ecological movement, the writings that speak of the destruction of nature and its flora and fauna, of the biological and physical world, have been designated as writings of 'Radical Statement'. It was born in the United States of America in the late 1950s or the early 1960s. Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962), Mary Daly's *Gyn/Ecology* (1978), Susan Griffin's *Woman and Nature, The Roaring Inside Her* (1978) are some of the foundational texts that have been able to shape public consciousness about ecology. At once pastoral and bleak in mood, ecological literature is the most elegiac of radical writings. In the late 1950s, Gary Snyder, the American poet, called for a "gentle stewardship" of nature, for a more sensitive awareness of our place in the "ecosystem" (Singh B.N. 2).

As the poet acts as the antennae of the society, his poetry establishes relationships so as to sustain society. In this regard, Ecocriticism's concern is with the category of place and hence with the ideal of reinhabitation, that is, that who we are and who we continue to be, is radically tied to what our surroundings "are and continue to be" (Terblanche 1999: 121). From these considerations it may be the relatedness of everything to everything and this implies an osmotic sense of boundaries (ibidem 122).

Like the ancient Indian literatures, the studies of Greek philosophers- Hippocrates, Aristotle and others were ecological in nature, but they did not have a word for ecology. The earth's total skin of air, water, soil and the biosphere, the planetary system, agriculture, industry, biological processes and everything whatever exist on the earth organic or inorganic, constitute the ecology (Sen David N 2). Our present era witnesses a revolution in the ecological awareness because we have been acutely affected by the pollutions arising out of destruction of nature/ecology for promotion/progress of industry/technology. Now we are revolutionizing the economy of ecology.

Tribals of various regions of India know very well that there is only one path to survival and that path is the ecological one, of harmony between man and nature. They believe that all nature is sacrosanct, that the earth itself as a living organism is capable of experiencing pain and pleasure. This holistic view of the universe is also very beautifully described by Kalidasa in his writings (Choudhury 172-173). Our basic ethos has taught us to live in harmony with nature, in a relationship of mutual dependence. The ecology, i.e. the earth, with its rivers and rich flora and fauna, is an intricate web of life. Development in the western pattern causes annihilation of this living organism/ecology; it destroys our resources rapidly. As such our chief concern at present is to think of alternative means of development which should be eco-friendly by "technology with a human face and that will link development with culture or, in other words, will boost the cultural ecology. As have been dilated in several of the world literatures, the nature/ecology/environment is feminine. The destruction of Nature is ravish/oppression of the Mother, that is, the rearer of the human kind. So for the upliftment of the mankind we have to maintain the environment properly. For this purpose "there are two ways for transforming and maintaining a harmonious relationship with our physical and social environment. One, to think or act with *ecofeminism*, that, the nature is at the centre of our experience and that the destruction of nature is linked with the oppression of women. Two, to expose the Western mode of development with totalizing tendencies and go also for an alternative model of development which will allow for the rhythm and movements of human life to be in accordance with nature". (ibidem 176-177). The cultural ecology believes in the sacredness of human life. *Prakriti* (Nature) is a sacred goddess and it reacts to bring

about ecological sanity. Though the ecology movement is not necessarily feminist, yet the North American (Indian) Women's poetry, which contributes to an understanding of the connections between the domination of persons and domination of non-human nature and between misogyny and hatred of nature, is an instance of ecological feminism or ecofeminism (Dasan 83). These poets have played leading roles in fighting against colonialism, patriarchy and in preserving their distinct cultural traditions and systems of knowledge (ibidem 78-79). Their struggle is more specific and powerful than the Indian woman poets who are writing in English. The Indian English woman poets have been dominated by the patriarchal ideology and they have a tough time coping with the consequences of a phallo-centric myth of creativity (Chibber 165). It is further said, "A random survey of Indian women writing poetry in English in the eighties reveals a fraternity of urban post-independence products boasting of degrees in subjects as varied as literature, law and molecular genetics. Cutting across socio-cultural barriers they attempt to give a lie to Jean Jaques Rousseau's misogyny that "women.....can acquire scientific knowledge, erudition and talent.....but the celestial fire which heats and engulfs the soul..... will always be lacking from women's writings" (ibidem 167). Thus an eco-mystic/ eco-mysterious trend of writing is present in the Indian English poetry. About the Indian English women poets' ecological concerns, Chibber says, "Nature is too often only a part of expensive vacation excursions. It is not the harsh reality of survival as it is for millions of our country-women. The turbulent rivers, jagged rocks, or burning desert sands that they describe do not really touch their lives and so lose their colours in their poetry. Poverty is fashionable material for poetry and the grief it evokes is synthetic and is mostly an intellectual posture" (ibidem 173).

Tagore's poetry is mostly nature-centric and evolutionary. There seems to be conspicuous development of thought and diversity in his whole poetic career. The development of Tagore's poetry can be traced at the various stages of life. In Pre-*Gitanjali* period, poems like *The Awakening of the Waterfall* and *Evening Songs* are quite significant. Both the poems shun gloom and despondency and a strong sense of joy prevails. At his twenty-one, he composed the poem, *Evening Songs*. The poems of next stage of his career deal with the theme of the newly awakened consciousness of reality. Some poems of Tagore deal with the social problems of the day. 'Basundhare' in *Sonar Pari* is one of his nature poems of this period. It is not it mere remembrance of

communion with nature, but also fills longing to dwell amidst nature. Though Tagore appreciated the calmness and tranquility of nature, some poems also depict the destructive aspects of nature. Tagore has depicted nature in all aspects. The first stage of his poetic career abounds in natural phenomena with all its ingredients.

The initial period is followed by the most eventful period of Tagore's life. Whatever he wrote during this time was overshadowed by the magnum opus *Gitanjali*. His poetic talent and exposure reached new heights as he was acclaimed all over the world. *Gitanjali* is a collection of lyrics on God, Man and Nature undefined by his romantic longing for a communion with the divine. The word *Gitanjali* means an offering of songs. Its central theme is the realization of the divine through self-purgation and service to humanity.

The *Gitanjali* songs are mainly poems of Bhakti in the great Indian tradition. Tagore's poems own their inspiration to the Upanishadic doctrine, which envisages the world and entire creation as having been born out of joy, residing in joy and returning to joy at last. The whole book is endowed with rich poetry of great significance. It leaves readers in a fit of contemplation. Even the opening lines seem to create a palpable influence on people:

Thou hast made me endless, such is thy
pleasure.
This frail vessel thou emptiest again and
again, and fillest it ever with fresh life.(1)

Gitanjali is a collection of hundred and three poems. It is ornamented with simplicity and sublimity. Lofty ideas and noble sentiments are mingled with striking images to provide solidity to the work. *Gitanjali* was originally composed in Bengali, but Tagore transcreated his original poems into English. So the English *Gitanjali* is not a literal and comprehensive translation of Bengali *Gitanjali*. The English poems are true

translations, expressing the main ideas of the Bengali poems which may be regarded as fresh compositions.

When *Gitanjali* was published in 1912, the whole world including the Westerners was struck with wonder. This collection of innovative poems rendered them speechless in admiration. That is why aptly in 1913 Tagore received the Nobel Prize for this laudable and peerless work. It compelled all the greatest men of letters to marvel and contemplate of his new set of ideas and sentiments. *Gitanjali* opens four distinctive worlds before the humanity, i.e., (i) God and human soul, (ii) God and nature, (iii) Nature and soul, and (iv) the soul and humanity (Satish Kumar 88). God as the giver of the infinite gifts is at the root of every thing. The nature upholds all the glories of the Almighty God. Every line of *Gitanjali* exposes the mystical glory and mystery of nature and God. Expressing his main objective “I am here sing thee songs”(9), the persona in *Gitanjali* devotes himself to exposing the greatest glory of the Almighty. As such *Gitanjali* as a divine song exposes the Deep ecology principle of eco-criticism. The persona is intoxicated with the love of God at the immortal touch of whose hands his “little heart loses its limits in joy and gives birth to utterance ineffable”. Though “ages pass, still thou (God) pourest, and still there is room to fill” (1-2) –speaks of the mystery of God’s creation. The Almighty being “ Life of my life, I shall ever try to keep my body pure, knowing that thy living touch is upon all my limbs”(3) is the essence of persona’s prime conscience. The persona celebrates the nature’s glories and rejoices in them. The trees, flowers, sky, waters, rains, birds and all creatures rejoice at His command. Hence the persona sings: “ I have had my invitation to this world’s festival and thus my life has been blessed. My eyes have seen and my ears have heard” (10).

Realizing Almighty’s presence everywhere the persona sings: “thou art the sky and thou art the nest as well. O thou beautiful, there is in the nest it is thy love that encloses the soul with colours and sounds and odours” (45). The persona is overwhelmed by the maya (illusion) of the Almighty Creator and surrenders his self to Him. The persona’s self-surrender is his extreme devotion to the Lord and hence he sings: “Like a flock of homesick cranes flying night and day back to their mountain

nects let all my life take its voyage to its eternal home in one salutation to thee". The superb ecomystical strain in *Gitanjali* is quite spiritual and spiritually ecological. Words fail to describe such divine experiences. The poets of Northeast India show some glimpses of spirituality and divinity according to their regional cultures in religious or animistic strains. But Rabindranath Tagore's ecomysticism and spiritually ecological strains is universally excellent.

The Gardener stands next only to *Gitanjali*. It is one of the most wonderful collections everproduced in English. Almost all the poems deal with sheer love, which is worldly as well as divine, though it is hard to distinguish in Tagore's poetry. All the emotions of love like agony, despair, delight, and fulfilment are woven together into a garland of memorable songs. Quite a few of the poems and songs in *The Gardener* are seen to be as good as the best in *Gitanjali*. Yet the collection as a whole is devoid of intensity and organic unity which is reminiscent of the great work.

Indian English poetry from North-eastern part of India is rich with various aspects of the ecology of the region. It has been a fashion with the poets of the region to celebrate the ecological glory of the region and their ecological awareness. The ruthless act of deforestation and oppression upon the Mother Nature in various ways by destroying the serenity of the nature, obliterating the natural environment, killing rare birds and animals and distorting the landscape and biodiversity, have been sharply reacted upon by these poets.

Ms. Mamang Dai (1957–) and Mr. Yumlam Tana (1976–) of Arunachal Pradesh have sympathetically responded to the ecological glory and ecological concerns of the land in their poetry. Ms. Mamang Dai is reminded of the past of Arunachal in her quest for identity. In her poetry, life in Arunachal Pradesh, peoples' faiths and her own, agriculture, mountains, streams, rivers and stones, myths, and nature's magic, reveal myriad world of Arunachal's ecology and mysterious and glorious heritage. She reflects the significance of Arunachalee culture and traditions and recent or modern transitions in the mosaic of their living conditions. A keen explorer of heritage, she seems to be a

sentinel of traditional tribal values. The myriad environment with profound serenity in nature, rich biodiversity, an innocent voice about the things in the surroundings and many other environmental concerns has been her important concerns. She voices her emotions and feelings through the images and metaphors chosen mostly from nature. Her search for identity has exposed her to be a nature-loving-humanist [Das 2004(a): 96]. She reveals her beliefs in the tribal pantheon of Gods and mystery of enviroing ecology.

The poet ponders over the contemporary systems of living in Arunachal and contrasts them with the ancient ways of life and agriculture. She has been an observer of the changes in the tribal society over the time:

I know/
 from faces that I meet/
 in these lives/
 that have crumbled/
 that the past lives/
 in these eyes/
 that the jungle shows/
 sometimes....., the mountain knows/
 how we pressed our hearts/
 against its earth/ we placed the shadows/
 where they are/
 in the leisure of dreams/
 the sky wind knows,/
 how we grew flowers/
 in fields of stone. (ibidem).

She has been a close observer of the wide socio-cultural and eco-cultural changes in her land, Arunachal Pradesh, which is known as one of the thirty odd

biodiversity hot-spots in the world. The men, mountains, rivers, trees and harvests have been her important subjects. In her poem entitled “Sky Song”, she says–

We left the tall trees standing
 We left the children playing
 We left the women talking,
 and the men are predicting Good harvests, or bad
 that winged summer
 We left, racing with
 the leopards of morning. (ibidem 5).

Vilas Sarang considers Indian English poets as river poets as most poets write on the Indian rivers (13). Ms. Dai is also a river poet. Living near the rivers amidst the natural surroundings, and varied feelings, experiences, and emotions, make the poet remember the transactions of life and plights of the components of nature. The past of her ancient land, the red robed men, the tribal rituals, tribes living in caves and the favourite, mysterious ecology lurk in her mind. Such rememberances make her a myth-maker, a designer of living realities and the contemporary myths, or the ancient and present life in Arunachal Pradesh:

I remember then/
 the great river/
 that turned, turning/
 with the fire/
 of the first sun/
 away from the old land/
 redrobed men,
 and the poisonous ritual,”/
Remember the flying dust/
 and the wind,
 like a long echo/

snapping the flight/
of the river beetle,
venomous in the caves/
where men and women/
dwelt, facing the night,
guarding the hooded poison. [2000(b): 64/ 2003: 20]

The lines quoted above from a poem entitled “The Missing Link” is about the river Siang of Arunachal Pradesh. The stretch of the river remained unexplored by geographers when the Survey of India was trying to establish the Tsangpo-Brahmaputra river connection. Nostalgic of her childhood days, the poet traces the ecology of the river with a deep sense of mystery and mysticism:

I will remember then the fading voices of deaf
women framing the root of light
in the first stories to the children of the tribe.
Remember the river’s voice
where else could we be born where
else could we belong
if not of memory divining life and form out of silence water
and mist, the twin gods, water and mist,
and the cloud woman always calling
from the sanctuary of the gorge. (2003: 20)

The rivers, eastern mountains, the flash of summer, intricate nature, divinity in trees, starry skies, the great river, Brahmaputra, landscape full of memories, which the poetess calls “myth and mystery”, (2001: 154), crowd her lines in poetry. Hers is the poetry of landscape:

Without speech
 We practised a craft
 leaving imprints
 on sky walls,
 Linking the seasons,
 coding the trailing.....
 mist in silent messages
 across the vast landscape. [2000(b): 66]

Ecological erosion is of deep concern for the poet and through her awareness of these erosions, she is visionary of a new world of shallow ecology with planted green seedlings. She is hopeful that realizing the decadence and environmental pollution, the world must come back with revived ecology:

And all across the land
 they are singing
 the big trees have fallen
 breaking our dreams,
 and all across the land
 they are still singing
 blind eyes,
 blind space still expanding
 full of hope.
 Do not ask
 how remedies are made.
 The carriers of dreams
 bring small sustenance
 A radiance
 in the wind,
 On a soft summer's day
 intent on the voices
 Of children

We stand
 On the turning road again
 planting green seedlings. [2000(b): 63-64]

Like Dai, Yumlam Tana (1976–) is a river poet. He writes about Tsangpo, Dibang Valley, jhum fields in his surroundings and the life in the bosom of nature. He belongs to the Nyishi tribe of Arunachal Pradesh. The Nyishi myth of brotherhood of the man and the tiger and the cultural ecology of Nyishis are his prime concerns. He writes about his identity by humanising his status universally:

I write in English
 which is not my language
 You see, I am a Nyishi
 A tribal claiming to be a man.
 I am all humanity,
 With no geographical boundary,
 No social restrictions, no biological limitations.
Nothing to divide me from my fellowmen.
 (Nongkynrih & Ngangom 13)

He speaks of his brotherhood with the tiger and the ecology of his surroundings, where nature is the foster mother:

My brother, my mother nestled so fondly
 on her bosom
 Singing lullabies in the night and
 when away to the jhum fields in the mountains
 We played various games around the house He
 was my playmate. He was my nurse....
 The Tsangpo flowing through the Dibang

Valley And the plains of India
 And Bangladesh....
 So the tiger must stalk in the forest
 To kill and spill blood for blind appetite
 And the man, a social animal,
 Search an Ideology to suit his Intellect. (ibidem 14-15)

Mamang Dai and Yumlam Tana exposed their deep concerns for the ecology of Arunachal and have tried to glorify their biodiversity. In their future poetry their exploration will reveal the other dimensions of eco-system dynamics and homeostasis.

Though love for nature is intense in the poets of Assam who are writing in English as most of them are romantics, but profuse descriptive passages about ecological awareness are rare in their poetry. Maheswar Neog who tried his hand with English verse *Under One Sky (1970)* writes about the people and landscape of the East European countries which he visited under the Indo-Foreign Cultural Exchange Programme. The Indian landscape finds casual references in his poems. In 'Pranams to the Danube', he writes:

Here is no Gangā, no Yamunā, no Sarasvati, No Godavari, no Kaveri, or no
 Brahmaputra. Yet here am I touching the water of the Danube in my pilgrimage.
 Here are no Mughal Gardens;
 Yet here do I look at every strange face, every
 beautiful face, And it blossoms forth into kindness
 and grace. (1)

A famous teacher of English, Amaresh Datta (1920–), who is a fine romantic poet in his momentary impressions, has given abundant references to nature, though a serious attempt to expose ecological disaster in India and an awareness concerning

ecology is untraceable in his stanzas. In his poem ‘My God’, his romantic use of some ecological terms can be seen:

You have given me
 The freedom
 To traverse my *sky*
 To gain my *nest’s paradise*
 Or lose it. (34)

In another poem “In the beginning”, such uses continue to appear:

In the beginning was the dream
 He said: let there be *light*
 And pressed the *button*
 And the *light* was there
 In his walled *globe*.
 And *water* too
 For his lackey brought it cool from the bar. (ibidem 35).

Lakshahira Das, (1933–), who is called the skylark of North-eastern India [Das 1998(a): 29/ 2004(c): 15], “at the core of whose poetry lies a deep love for mother earth and who accepts and welcomes life with its scent, colour, sap and all pains and affliction (Sarma 1996: 99), is a bilingual poet. Her poems translated into English, were enshrined in Hem Barua’s *Modern Assamese Poetry (1960)* when she could have written originally in English. Her lone collection of poetry both in English translation and originally written in English, entitled *Between Births (1990)* presents her myriad views on nature and human values. Lakshahira has chosen majority of her poetic images from nature. In her ten poems originally written in English, she mingles the grace of the elements of ecology with the transactions in human life and her lyric sensibilities. In her poem entitled “The lingering light”, the glorious light which lingers on the temple

tower, spreads its fragrance over the cloud, trees and familiar roads and the breeze which embraces the sea, throws the golden waves of light around the poetess. The forest grows like love in splendour; straining her arms, she reaches out to the forest and smearing her hands with her tears, she touches the infinite darkness of cerebral anguish of doubt, misunderstanding and being oppressed. At this moment, the songs from the magic flute from some hidden source, fills the air, leaving “the petals of *poesy* amidst crushed Rajanigandhas” (ibidem 28). To give expression to her superb lyric sensibility, the poetess chooses images from the nature, which proves her sincere inclination towards her environment. In another poem “Visit to Neli”, the poetess exposes the cruelty and atrocity of the communal rioters by making the elements of nature sympathise innocent children killed in the massacre of Neli, 1983. In this lullaby, the poetess sings,

Sleep my child
 Sleep in the lap of mother earth....
 Only sunshine brightens your innocent face....
 Sleep my child
 Sleep alone on grass,
 the dew, the dust
 in the lap of mother earth
 The moonlit night of
 Chaturdashi will cover
 Your tender body
 The soft wet cries of the forest will
 hum a lullaby (ibidem 30)

Bhupati Das, a mystic and romantic, who is the finest among the poets of Assam writing in English [Das 2004(c): 19] in his mystic and romantic thoughts, he has consistently leant against the ecology, so to say, the cultural and physical ecology, though his is not a protest against the ecological imbalance or environmental pollution. To introduce his poems in the collection entitled *May I (1998)*, he writes a verse introduction revealing his mystic and romantic vision:

the sky was an honest blue
 the stars were bright
 and the sea was a dancing dream
 with the waves echoing
 the joys of an expectant night
 a poignant moment
 in a cascading embrace
 with the love waves (op. cit. np)

His significant images like river, rainbow, rain, clouds, sky, stone, sun, moon, star, rays, trees, leaves, angels, gods are chosen from nature, signifying some senses related to ecology. Most poems are but soliloquies where the frustrated lover has chosen 'nature' or the matrix of ecology as his final resort.

Dayananda Pathak very significantly in his rambling propensity, has been inconsistent in using in detail the concept of nature. To unravel the existentialist ideologies of Man in this world he has selected some terms related to nature to use them as image or symbol in poems as in the following instance:

Diamond

We are born *flowers*
 pure and holy,
 Life makes us *stones*
 sagged and rude, Here
 innate *fragrance*
 never comes.

Souls killed in the *bud*
 Well before midday *Sun*.
 Would they lead to
 a costly *diamond*
 after history's
 cruel sedimentation? (1998: 27)

Umakanta Sarma's *Thawing Out* (1998) containing only ten poems, vividly depicts natural glory, scenery and significance reflecting the symbolic justifications for human situations. Man's reckless atrocity/oppression upon the ecology situating his destiny in a perilous stage is absent in his poems. His choice of image for nature reveals his lenience to nature. In a love poem he exposes love with the help of a nature background:

An aroma of ploughed earth
 crawled through ferrous
 fresh, grassy, moist.
 A burnt leaf
 sticking on a wet bud,
 An aroma of
 Rohini's half-dried dress. (op. cit. 26)

Pradip Kumar Patra who is domiciled in Assam is another notable poet. He won the Michal Madhusudan Award for his poetry from Michael Madhusudan Academy. Presently he teaches in the Department of English in Bodoland University and is concerned with both theory and practice of poetry. A young enthusiastic poet of inborn merit, Pradip Kumar Patra belongs to the coastal district of Balasore in Orissa. Patra has seven books of poems to his credit, namely, *Panoromic Shillong*, *Summer Implications*, *The Winding Path*, *Midnight Divinity*, *Denouement*, *Dewy Morning* and *The Rain Speaks*.

Though Patra belongs to coastal Orissa, he has been living in Assam for the last two decades and as such he may be regarded as one of the North East Indian English poets due to his deep sense of rootedness to the Northeast. Mapping the link between Assam and Orissa is one of the recurrent themes of Patra's poetry. Poetry for Patra is a strong obsession and passion. He believes poetry to be a significant tool which can transform the humanity.

The calm and quite and pristine beauty and serenity of nature has potent influence in Patra's poetic experience influencing his poetic mind with different themes and content. Patra's early days were spent with the innocent simple people and scenery of a sweet and pastoral dignity in a remote village in the coastal district of Balasore in Orissa. His childhood intimacies with the beauty and bounties of nature with cowherds, open fields, its green hillocks and blue sky, hamlets and rivulets, shaped his mind noble and pure and gradually he apprenticed habits of observation in mind. The serene silence of nature taught him the art of being himself which at later stage gives him depth and sincerity to talk on the spiritual exploration of his self. Patra's poetic vision resembles with William Wordsworth for evidence shows that the poet achieves the spiritual or extra-ordinary knowledge through a deep emotional contact with nature by means of his senses of seeing, sensing, talking and hearing. Patra finds a living presence in nature which forms the 'soul' of his moral being. As a domiciled poet of Assam P.K. Patra has a deep appreciation for the scenic beauty of the Eastern region of India. The ecology, landscape and the memory of it is depicted in the poems like "Assam Greenery in Labyrinth", "A Night in Assam" "Immortal Gradma at Kamakhya", "Panoramic Shillong" etc. Patra talks of the "Natural tapestry" of Assam in many of his poems. As a poet, Patra is mostly associated with countryside for he feels that it is the countryside that is mostly associated with the nature and the mysteries of the universe. For him his village is a source of imagination. In the poem, "Evening in a village" Patra says:

The village evening flares the
dying creativity in me. (Patra 27)

For Patra country side bears an image of his own personal feeling. He deftly writes in his poem “suffering” included in *Denouement*:

When the evening is sleeping
 in the shamble of hope and despair
 I grope for the image of suffering. (Patra 55)

Patra also links his intense relationship, fond memory and the warmth of his village life with nature and the universal forces for a greater meaning and significance in the poem “Perception of the Earth”, included in *Midnight Divinity*:

Startled I am by the ghostly appearance of
 the Earth; ghost and darkness,
 and ghost, I find no clear meaning.
 The only feeling that follows is fear,
 but fear does not scar me; it is the only force
 that deepens my feeling, emotion and
 impressions and make me most human
 for a complete perception of the earth. (Patra 37)

The glory of nature is appreciated in Patra like Tagore. Nature in multiple manifestations of landscape is clearly visible in the poems like “Morning Delight”, “Unfamiliarity” etc. The poet writes:

One early winter morning
 I was walking on the sand;
 The river by my side
 Was a transparent portrait
 Of a dedicated artist. (Patra 38)

The vital force of nature has influenced a kind of ambition and despair in the poems like “Transcending Despair and Stagnation” “The Beach Festival” and “Languishing the wind” included in the volume of poems *Summer Implications*. In the poems included in *Dewy Morning*, landscape evokes a kind of dream, history and living myth.

Patra turns inward to the world of memories and dreams in certain introspective vision in *Panaromic Shillong*. He expresses the feeling in the poems like “Ganesh of my Dream and vision” etc. Like Tagore in Patra the stern reality of poetic self comes in contact with the glorified implications of nature.

Nature images, motifs, symbols like water imagery, pastoral imagery, mystical images abounds in Patra’s poetry. Water imagery in the forms of rain, river, dew, mist is vital imagery in Patra’s poetry. Like Tagore, in Patra also there is an exploration of the ‘self’. Patra believes in an ‘Existence’ beyond realities. They wish to explore its realities, its mysteries. Like Tagore the images of Nature are used by Patra to explore the subjective ‘I’ within him. In the poem ‘Feeling the Rain within’ of *Summer Implications* Patra says:

The voice pierces my being
and its cooling effect passes
So gently through the “I” in me. (Patra 10)

The ‘rain’ image, like Tagore’s poem has been used in many of Patra’s poem. Patra uses ‘rain’ image as a life force, a metaphor for spiritual zeal. In the poem “Reinterpreting Rain” Patra says:

Rain is
 An old subject
 an old symbol
 For Poetry (Patra 1-4)

Rain is a source of great relief for Patra. In the poem “Rain” the poet says:

What is relief!
 The rain endows me with riches Which
 a human being hankers after
 For the state of exaltation is the
 Pre-condition of such a achievement. (Patra 9-13)

Water images abound in Patra’s poems. Just as Wordsworth recollects his association with river Wye, Patra remembers his childhood acquaintances with the river Subarnarekha, in the poem “All about Subarnrekha” (from *Summer Implications*):

A river near my village
 Speaks a lot to me at dawn.---
 I run to its bank at the
 time of my frustration. (Patra 61)

Both Tagore and Patra believe in an order of things beyond their objective realities. They wish to explore its mysteries and to understand more clearly what life means. As Tagor hears “In the rainy gloom of July nights on the thundering chariot of clouds/ he comes, comes, ever comes”, Patra captures the rare moment of imagination that moulds his inner self” in the poems like “The Image of my own self” (from *Denouement*):

Sometimes I go to the river to splash in the
 Knee-deep water; I sit on a rock and hear the
 Sound of the oar from the boat visible in silhouette.
 My artistic sensibility lying dormant in me rushes
 forward to capture the scene in my imagination. (Patra 59)

Through the aforesaid lines it is clear that like the great romantic poets Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, in the poems of both the poets Tagore and Patra, the organic sensibility, the capacity to receive imposes through sense is beyond any doubt. In both the poets the sense of sight hearing and touch can be asserted. Like Tagore, Patra expresses his acute sense of wonder on the mysteries of nature in the lines of the poem “An Intimate Search” (*Summer Implications*):

looking at the night-wedded sky
 I only wonder, mystery engulfs me with
 any heart silent and still. (Patra 65)

There is vivid portrayal of landscape, country side memory of it in Patra’s poetry also. Landscape and rural beauty act as vital catalytic force in Patra’s creative regeneration. Patra believes countryside is more close to nature. Which finds expression in the poems like “Experiencing a Bliss” included in *Summer Implications*.

I have observed, my village smiles
 in the tumultuous night of
 heavy downpour and smile the
 Peasants ploughing the land
 against the backdrop of the morning.
 Sea whose rapport with the rain
 Conspires to contribute their mite
 to the fertility of the sterile earth. (Patra 48)

Patra while churning the memory of his grand mother identifies himself with the sun, sky and the clouds in his poem, “My Grandmother” include in *The Rain Speaks*;

The paddy fields at the end of my village
 Just like the village women gessip
 Masculinity of the sun above,
 The sky looks on; the clouds with nepterious shapes
 Join each other before raining on the dizzy paddy fiend (Patra 53)

Here Patra gives a divine touch to his worldly experience. The serene and calm quite morning is depicted in his poem “Dewy Morning”;

I was looking at the
 Cloudy designs of the sky
 Through the coconut leaves
 And trying to know if there was any
 resemblance between the design
 and the event of my dreams. (Patra 21)

Tagore’s love for his homeland is well-enshrined through his poetry. The ecology, landscape, myth, legends, rites and rituals, culture of his homeland are best exposed in his poetry.

The essence of nativity plays a vital role in Patra’s poetry also. Like Tagore and other provinent poets of Orissa like Jayanta Mahapatra, Bibhu Padhi Patra’s poems also glorifies the past and the present, Natural glory, myth, legends, tradition, cultural set up of a soil where they are form. Patra feels proud of his native state Orissa. So much that in exalted mode if he writes in the poem “Orissa”,

To live in Orissa is to live amidst past
and present both and march toward an epic
the kind of which Homer would have failed to create (Patra 37)

Memory plays a vital role in the poems of Patra. His innocent childhood memory of the “dreached horizon”, “the warmth of his village life”, “his childhood acquaintance with the river “Subarnarekha” is recorded in many of his poems. The poets attachment to his native land, finds expression the following lines of the poem “The Native Land” :

What native land is
What characteristic
makes a difference nobody knows. (Patra 36)

Patra highlights countryside not only for its natural beauty and innocent people, but also for its joy and mirth relating to various festivals.

No precision
No artificiality
and no conscious improvisation,
and only an expansion of nuddle
in memory of some legend or myth. (Patra 43)

Patra has been in Assam for the last fourteen years. The scenic beauty of this North Eastern part of India enlightens him greatly which is seen in the poems like “Memory of Kaldia at Jalah”, where he writes:

The Kaldia comes out
 Of the Himalayas.
 The age-old mountain
 Sitting reminiscent
 of his past mythical glory in
 the Northern horizon
 overlooks the river. (Patra 41)

Poetry recaptures feelings of wonder. Here both Tagore and Patra resembles with Wordsworth. They viewed the simple and common place things of life with artlessness and wonder. Wordsworth finds ecstatic joy witnessing the dark echoing clouds silhouetted against the silver grey sky. Tagore, in the same way felt ecstatic witnessing the dark echoing clouds silhouetted against the silver grey sky. Like wise Patra feels solicited beholding the calm of the sky. In the poem “A Rare Insight” included in *Summer Implications* Patra says:

My mind assumes the clam of
 the sky and remains a child
 Whose docility leaves me
 In peace and percipience. (Patra 18)

The poets of Assam have used the aesthetics of ecology to make a verbal exploration of their vision. They are not attentive to the ecological imbalance/environmental pollution on their motherland and not serious about the necessary ecological awareness. An ecofeminist implication is obvious in a few poems of Lakshahira Das. Other poets who are bilingual, and chiefly write in their mothertongue are not conscious about the ecology movement sweeping across the globe. The landscape of Assam, which has been glorified in the vernacular poetry, has remained unreflected in poetry written in English.

R.K. Madhubir, whose poetry in English is a consistently tenacious quest for roots, reflects the ecological disaster in Manipur, in his personal world and the world at large. He is forerunner of all contemporary Indian English poets of North East India in reacting against man's atrocity against Mother Nature and his ruthless insensibility in destroying the Nature carelessly. In a number of poems he has exposed his reactions, suggested redressal of ecology and revival of the glory of nature. He is recurrently satiric of contemporary man's recklessness of the rich biodiversity which has been sustaining human life and culture from time immemorial. He is so much obsessed with the ecological inequilibrium that in his dreams even he has been disturbed about it:

In my last night dream
 All peaks of Himalayas fallen
 Fallen to dust and flown through rivers
 Pacific, Mediterranean and Indian oceans
 Frozen into hard and concrete rocks
 No one worries no one cries No
 plant exists no wind blows
 Standstill the sun above the sky
 And the earth rotates no more. (1987: 4)

Though making and re-making go on in the Nature continuously, the poet proclaims that "nature never destroys herself" (ibidem 12) and in his frustration against the careless destruction of the biodiversity in the modern times, he vehemently claims that nobody will save him from "the deluge" (ibidem 14):

In my blood there is water
 in my breath there is air
 and in my diet there is protein
 but everything now useless will
 no one save me now either
 Krishna or Jesus or Allah or

Shidaba, any one of you
 be kind and save me from the deluge
 save me kindly from the deluge. (ibidem 14)

In a long poem entitled “Hunter Hunter Pitiless Hunter” the poet reveals the merciless activities of the modern man against mother Nature. He calls the ‘man’ as ‘pitiless hunter’. The modern man has been so much disillusioned by the pride of his false adventures that he has been killing the innocent creatures mistaking them as ferocious ones. As such the poet calls the modern man by the name of mythical ‘Ravana’. As a staunch guardian of ecological awareness and the cultural ecology of the land of his birth, he celebrates the glory of the landscape of Manipur and refers the rivers of the land, named Imphal and Nambul which flow surrounding the city of Imphal. Now the green and rich forests of the land are vanishing day by day and are going beyond the touch of humans. So sings Madhubir:

A far away place from city
 the forest lies beyond human
 touch the resting place of Mother Nature
 the Sheltering Centre of innocent animals
 the calm and quiet forest now becomes
 Hiroshima of second great war
 how pitiless you are;
 how prodigious you are;
 step for a few moments
 do not shoot your poisonous arrows hunter,
 hunter, pitiless hunter. (ibidem 17)

He calls the destroyers of the Nature as ‘germs’. With the decay of the environment and distortion of ecology, the culture, art and religions of nations worldwide are demolishing in spite of the evolutions of the new concepts. Extensive activities to protect the biomass from erosion or obliteration must be undertaken or else

there is every risk of the collapse of our life system. The poet sympathizes Mother Nature and exposes his asphyxiation and exasperation over environmental decadence which is the principle of shallow ecology:

Mother universe
 mother of my father mother of mother
 Oh, unlucky withered mother
 are you too vanishing a day
 slowly and slowly by the germs
 which increasing minute after minute
 and decreasing plants and animals
 where human beings their sepulchre
 culture, art, religion on different nations
 once your multicolouring garden
 now neglecting and vanishing day by day. (ibidem 20-21)

Madhubir's latest collection of verse, *The Shadow of Darkness (1998)* reflects his eco-conscience more emotionally. He revolts against the exploitation of Mother Nature and lamenting for the inhumanity of the contemporary denizens, he resolves to leave the motherland in frustration:

Let us leave mother, our motherland today.
 The cows, the goats, the sheep are eating
 red meat and fish, instead of greens
 eating their mouthful, the bloody gristle.
 The ponds, the lakes, the rivers, once so quiet and calm
 are full with red-hot blood.
 The harmonious soft notes of birds
 where are they gone now, I do not know.
 Instead, the shrill sound of vultures
 always I hear, shattering my ear.

Let us leave mother, our motherland today. (1998: 1)

He calls 'man' a glutton, because man's excessive greed for wealth/ prosperity/ valueless materialism, propels him for destruction of ecology. He feels that the place where the human being is absent is a place of pleasure and solace and so he says:

There will be no war, there will be no killing
cause there's now not a human being here. (ibidem 11).

For better sustenance of ecology, purification of the polluted air, he suggests to dispose the waste of the nature by cutting down the fruitless, rotten, and stinky trees and burning them down and planting new saplings (ibidem 12). There are several other poems like "A Dying Full Moon" (16), "Profile of the Earth" (20), "My Destiny" (22), "My Wish" (23), "Flower and Fire" (27), "Inaudibility" (29), "Green-field" (35), "Future Generations" (36), "Passing out Parade" (37), "Mother Earth" (39) and "Ode to Myself" (75-77) which reveal the poet's awareness of environment in principle of both deep and shallow ecology. Want of rain due to ecological disaster, the earth turning into barren land and unnatural transition in the cycle of seasons concern the poet critically. He reacts in his verse bitterly, like:

Days and months had passed away
Without a single drop of rain on earth
only the orphans are living now
on these barren lands....
but the change of season is natural
where is the spring?
Where are the days of rainy season? (ibidem 20-21)

Robin S. Ngangom, a sojourner in Shillong, is a home bound pilgrim who is essentially an eco-poet and eco-critic with his constant deliberations on various issues of nature and environmental degradation of the current age. Though various places of North East India and other nations find place in his poetry. Manipur, his homeland is his special attraction. He sounds his trumpet of awareness and consciousness to countrymen to revive the cultural and physical ecology of Manipur and to uphold the cultural destiny and place and race consciousness to face the challenges of time. A Meitei (Manipuri) by birth, he is the most representative contemporary Indian English poet of the North-eastern India [Das 1998(b): 94], and has contributed profusely to poetry by exploiting the folk-culture and folkloric tradition of Meghalaya [Das 2003(b): 21]. The landscape of other North-eastern states like Arunachal, Assam, Mizoram, Sikkim and Tibet has been depicted in his poetry [Ngangom 2003(a) 29/1995: 126-128/2002: 93-95]. Revealing his ecological concern, the poet says about his own creed:

I am a poet of earth and space,
possibly water, but not fire. I know
my limitations, and there are many things
between earth and sky I cannot name.
I have an ancient desire for understanding,
meaninglessness frightens me.
That is why I love simple things
such as sunlight on our shoulders,
or woman with firm breasts
and hills quiet in the rain. [2000(a): 39].

Robin is more bothered about the changes in Manipur due to the contemporary politics and social revolutions that result in insurgency. At several places in his poetry, he has exposed his concern about the ecology. He is worried about deforestation in Meghalaya and its bad effect on the hills:

Although we kill more than a hundred trees
 every month in our region of hills outstretched
 as our guileless hands once,
 still the rainsong like our disturbed
 dreams.... We of the hills, who have
 so little,
 will be patient with voice of our women
 with the munificence of our trees, without widowed
 soil, and uprooted animals (1988: 19)

The obliteration of the bio-diversity pains the poet. He is upset with the carelessness of the present generation regarding their exploitation of nature. To complain of the ecological degeneration along with the eco-cultural perversion, the poet declaims in a poem entitled "Racial Progression";

We are the remnants of a
 dying people We scorn the
 memory of the dead....
 Come to our forests and visit our lodges
 Come and share with us our glorious culture. (ibidem: 20-21).

The poet names the rich ecology of his land as "ancestral granaries" and warns his countrymen against the oppression upon nature which will result in unbearable consequences with his social and socialist ecological vision:

My people make a bonfire Of
 your ancestral granaries and
 cede your primordial hills to
 vultures from the plains....
 One day you'll find

no earth, no trees or rivers
 and would even sell
 a handful of blue sky
 to prolong your decadence. (ibidem 42-43)

A constantly tragic view of the denuded environment lurks in the mind of the poet and as such his poetry is replete with disappointment, decadence and pictures of degeneration:

Afternoon, when the
 cicada's cry is caught by
 the hill's ears
 and the rains withdraw
 for unknown land, legends
 are buried beneath layers of
 nudging earth;
 I walk alone across hostile maps,
 desolate and afraid. (1994: 28)

Winter on the hills is very symbolic of the death, degradation, denudation and bleakness. It symbolises the impending disaster due to the harm caused to the biodiversity of ecology by the humankind:

Winter is here
 And there's nothing more to be said.
 Earth has bared her bosom
 and in the thick of life
 We are in the thick of death. (1994: 29)

Ecology of the homeland is the dearest phenomenon for the poet. Remembering one of the finest writers of Manipur, a Sahitya Akademi award winner, late Pacha Meetei (1943-1990), who died in extreme poverty being hounded as a drunkard and madman, the poet establishes his verdict on importance of motherland's ecology in Pacha's words:

You only said: "One's homeland is dear.
I have not seen all of this land, I have not
been able to tread the grass that grows there. (1995: 126)

The natural environment of Mizoram is even celebrated by Robin in his verse. The rites, rituals and eco-cultural glories have been voiced by the poet, in his poem entitled "To a Woman from Southeastern Hills" (1995: 126-128).

"Tonight, a fullmoon steals above northern pines, and boys from your nativelyland sit on terraces with their dolorous guitars, singing of loves lost in the ravine of the heart." (ibidem 127)

The seasons exert various effects on the natives of the hills and thus says Robin in his poems that in summer "there reposes within me/ a desire not to meet anyone/ in the long afternoons" (1999:54), in autumn "by the presage of this dark wind/ harrowing the breast of the hill, the leaves's kindling,/ autumn returns, (ibidem) and at other times, "wedged between the stones of origin and the profane/ your muted steps belong to desertion/ while we search in rains of memory,/ with a solitary flower/ scanning monoliths standing in mist." (ibidem 54-55). The graces of nature are eroding with the spread of perversion and degeneration everywhere. As such the poet says:

Leaves no longer respond,
 to the alchemy of seasons,
 and the heart lies fallow
 expecting winter rain Earth
 has closed again like a woman
 when you do not return, and dreams turn to
 rust, the flame and the dew cannot create
 life. Only lust breaks on the branches of
 night, and men wear hideous masks, the
 fragrance of the wildrose is lost, and only
 the flowers of the market are on sale. [2000(a): 38]

The poet's memory of his past association with his friend Samir is reflected in his sense of today's degenerated natural environment and hence he is prophetic about a newtime when there will be a restoration of the ancient modes of life:

I fade into that distance, harking back
 to open fields of rice, away from your exhausted
 cough of factories and engines, touching
 braided roads to reach the hills.
 One day we shall be together again
 without names, with the simple things
 of earth, with plantain leaves, in months
 free of Sundays, and days without thoughts
 of women, with earthen pots and bamboo
 spoons. One day we shall walk that road
 where carrion-hunters have not defiled
 memory." [2000(b): 25-26]

The natural scenes and surroundings of Sikkim and Tibet find fine depiction in Robin's verse:

Teesta, tell me the meaning of your name.
 Like secretive men impelled by a sinuous love
 we follow your scent when the flame of the forest borrows a
 monk's robes and something shimmers beneath the veil of the
 Himalayan sky
 until you lift us on your maternal lap
 of flowers and stone, Gangtok. (2002: 94)

The capital city of Arunachal Pradesh named Itanagar (City of Baked Clay) and other places like Bandardewa, Bomdila and the natural glory of the land find lyric narration in Robin's verses and his poem entitled "City of Baked Clay" which epitomizes his eco-mystic attitude as he has mystified the greatness of the great places:

Bandardewa, strange syllables which
 followed us on the road until a crack on
 the green wall unfolded a blue river
 below, cottonclouds picked by
 mountains, the road relentless
 and then yak hair and hornbill feather on
 hats in a frontier market.
 A land of song and dances, roads
 becoming wild rivers, naked children
 about bamboo huts, a mansion with
 curling roofs
 and moody rice beer.
 I heard of songs sung all night and
 dances from house to house. A full
 moon,
 a quiet night,
 a sky which has lost its way, the blazing
 rhododendron trail
 to Bomdila still far away." [2003(a): 29]

Even in his prose-poems, Robin reveals his place politics and its ecology involving it with the present day insurgent activities. In the terrorist-ridden land sometimes innocent neighbours are also picked up by the armymen and are punished. As such Robin calls these places as ‘bad places’:

“Some times, through no fault of its own, a neighbourhood picks up a bad reputation. If you happen to visit it on a singularly uneventful day, you will find it roofed with a blue sky, and dark-green pines and bamboo stooping to kiss its dusty road.” [2003(b): 151].

In *Anthology of Contemporary Poetry from the Northeast* edited by Kynpham Sing Nongkynrih and Robin S. Ngangom, Robin’s poetry has been considered as poetry from Meghalaya and in my critical essay entitled “Nostalgic Matrices: Poetry in English from Meghalaya” [2003(b): 21-23] I have also discussed his poetry among other poets of Meghalaya as at present he is a Shillong-based poet. But here I consider him a poet from Manipur though he represents the whole of North-east because he introduces himself as a Meitei and even today he writes in his mother tongue Manipuri and is more garrulous about Manipur in his poetry. Both the poets of Manipur have humanised ecology of their land.

In Meghalaya, the Scotland of East, nearly a dozen poets write regularly in English. Those who write exclusively in English, among them Desmond Lee Kharmawphlang, Ananya Sankar Guha, Kynpham Sing Nongkynrih and Anjum Hasan, are famous and have published their poetry collections. Others who have exposed their ecological aesthetics and have exploited the myths and folklore of the land in poetry are Esther Syiem, Almond D. Syiem, Indari Syiem Warjri, Paul Lyngdoh, and Donboklang Ryntathieng. Robin Ngangom who has written extensively on Meghalaya has been discussed among the Manipuri poets.

Deforestation, destruction of nature's beauty and bounty and changing of nature's course to modern men's luxury are reflected in Kharmawphlang's poetry. In a poem entitled "Letter to a Dear Friend", he writes:

You ask me about our hills—well, they
 are still there—the stones
 and rivers too—they are being pimped
 for tourists and lately,
 in many places disembowelled
 mercilessly. Their clothes are carried away
 to the lowlands and
 their names are sometimes being changed. (Paranjape.ed. 1993: 30)

Due to the distortion of nature ecological disasters take place. In the same letter, he writes again:

Since you asked, I mention these things.
 When you write next,
 I may have some interesting things to
 report may be about the advent
 of acid rain or even the disappearance of
 some villages for mining of
 a rare mineral (ibidem 31)

About his race-and-place-consciousness in the context of modern times, he says:

The stories burn our memories like
 a distant meteor searing

the unnamed gloom; by their light I
 examine the great hurt I carry in my soul
 for having denied my own. (Nongkyrih et al 2003: 139)

He writes about lakes, falls, forest, seasons and villages and is never tired of telling stories about them and as such he says:

I never get tired of talking about my
 hometown.
 In summer the sky is pregnant, Swollen
 with unborn rain.
 Winter arrives, with a tepid sun
 touching the frozen hills, the dream-boats on lakes. (ibidem 134).

Decimated landscape, a haze hanging suspended farther in southern skies, morning bathed in unease and quietness, trees laying dead everywhere and sad pictures of villages asphyxiate his heart and in his frustration he says: “It is a race against time to save the sacred forest of *Thaiang*” (2000:5) and reveals further:

Sohpdok, Raitong, Sonidan.....
 the village names sound like an
 ancient chant as the road weaves
 around the hills,
 the jeep topping each rise to a heave.
 Wheels biting dust, spinning relentlessly (ibidem).

In his poem, *Thaiang Buried Roots*, the poet writes about the sacred forest of *Thaiang* and voices of the spirit of the forest. The poem contains a conversation

between the *ThaiangSpirit* and the poet about the environmental transitions in Meghalaya. [Das 2003(b): 25].

Constantly nostalgic of his hometown, Ananya S. Guha, voices his affinity with Shillong and the land of rains and clouds, Meghalaya. He calls Meghalaya, a 'fairyland' and counts down his days there:

This is my fairyland
 my monsoon-spilled hometown
 my frost-bitten home
 I have spent years lazing here
 to feel every morning
 a whiff of freshness
 a tang of the hilly air (1988: 33)

The flora and fauna of the land continuously haunt his mind and he feels pain to recount the act of deforestation and depletion of nature's glory:

The majestic pine trees
 call me
 with their verdant ornaments
 as I am whisked away
 in taxi or a car
 I burn their branches
 now and then
 Trees no longer
 look green.... (ibidem: 11)

By our careless and irresponsible activities of destroying nature's rich treasures,
we have been a huge threat to the safety of our foster mother, Nature:

We find the hawk in the wind, the trees,
the hills. This huge loneliness has
ensnared its net upon us We are but its
shadow
The fields shiver the sky grimaces
Unmoved by the emptiness of our threat; (1994: 29)

The poet finds ever-increasing gloom in his surroundings of perversion of
ecology and as such grim-faced nature is now helpless to save the humanity.
Addressing his pale-faced friend, the poet says:

Where were you then my light-eyed, pale-
faced friend, what dreams
do you weave in earthly hours?
What stories do you narrate
Of the hills, stores,
the sepulchred wind, as angels drift, ghosts
catcall. [2003(b): 7]

Man's future is uncertain today as his natural environment is destroyed. So says
the poet:

Or the man in the streets with
Uncertain tomorrow
I remember as a child: sunspun Moments
with grey spiralling mists

Rising hopes,
 The indomitable spirit of green trees
 And sulking crows. [2003(a): 105]

To take care of our future and to compensate the ecological disaster, we shall have to save the ecology/biodiversity from the destruction by redressing the loss. We shall have to take care of our environment:

Opening our arms, let us
 touch the hills
 touch the rain
 touch the skies
 silently. (1997: 16)

The famous Khasi poet, Kynpham Sing Nongkynrih is a great worshipper of Mother Nature. His homeland Meghalaya's rivers, lakes, forests, fairies, hills, stone and nature's bounty find recurrent depiction in his poetry. Though he published books of his poems late, his forerunners have not exposed man's insensibility towards the nature and environmental degeneration in sufficient quantum as he has done. Like W.B. Yeats' *Innisfree*, Cherrapunjee is Kynpham's *Innisfree*. The nuisance of cutting and burning of forests, and digging of mines have distorted the bosom of nature and devastated the glory of nature. So he has reacted vehemently against these activities in his poetry:

The barren hills
 that bear the pockmarks
 of minors and a foolish people that
 burn and cut at will,
 looks as unremarkable
 as half-naked little brats. [1992(a): 24]

He has sympathy with the nature and thus everywhere he gives a fond description of the graces of nature drawing the attention of everybody about how nature cares us:

The breeze, however,
 prowling between spells of furious wind, stole
 up from the brooks
 to meet me on the hills
 and whisper its sympathies on the golden grass. [1992(b): 18]

The hills of Meghalaya, his homeland are abundantly glorious. The cold climate of his place has been symbolic of the degeneration due to the negligence to the natural environment in all shapes. Thus to share the sufferings of the Mother Nature, he himself has decided to live like *fungus* and hence he says:

That is why I keep like fungus
 to this cold and dark interior
 and in everything that I do
 it is only the fungus that shows (1994: 57)

The poet's persona is upset about the frequency of strange ways and strange things which are alien to his land. He is obsessed with these:

For how long can we go on
 living like wind blown thistledowns?.....
 Like flowers, only strangers
 and strange ways have come
 to bloom in this land. (1998: 53)

With the myriad glory of the biodiversity of his land of birth, the poet establishes the identity of a Khasi in the following narration which is but cultural ecology of the Khasis. The cultural distinction of a Khasi is his identity. As such the persona finds a *Khasi* as a man, who once a year celebrates distinctively to:

sport a *muga*-mulberry turban,
 an eri shawl and is seen *en*
grande tenue at *weiking* or
pomblang
 who once a year, speaks of these great festivals
 and the teachings of his great ancestors.
 who once a year, says “to Know Man,
 to Know God, to Earn Righteousness” is
 our faith. But this, only once a year.
 (2004: 29)

He considers the sufferings of the hills men and depletion of hills’ tribes as a kind of ecological erosion. The hill folks’ struggle for survival is tough. As such he justifies the insurgency reared by the tribes as a protest against their movement towards extinction, which is a way of quest for survival and revival of their past glories:

Somewhere in a forgotten little corner of the world a hill
 tribe of one million,
 fearful of its extinction,
 waged an arms insurrection against a nation of billion [2003(a):30 / 2003(b):
 162]

Anjum Hasan is strong new voice in whose poetry a feminist voice is loud and reverberating, and she likens the sufferings and slavery of women to the suffering of mother-nature. She describes “laughter is just the language of pain” (1994: 22). She

exposes realities of life like a profound mystic pondering deep on the stark realities human existence:

Life is a woman
 Night, a stolen river
 drowning the sobbing chamber
 of unnamed girls.
 I see centuries of slavery
 in the shadows
 within one darkroom
 above a multitude of murky streets. (ibidem).

Slavery and suffering are key words in an ordinary citizen's life. As a lover of nature she rejoices in the bounty of nature and gives a very beautiful description of flora and fauna in her poems which pacifies the aggrieved souls:

The forest-green orb of the lime
 hanging from dull trees in empty gardens,
 the leaf of the pear, sifting sunlight and dividing rain.
 (2003: 128)

Anjum Hasan, who spent her childhood years in Shillong, is a non-tribal Muslim woman poet. She is a deeply introspective, frank and philosophical muse. "Well-read in English and other literatures, and a student of Philosophy, she has the right kind of "long foreground" for a serious engagement with poetry. Her poetry is evocative, emotive, and built around memories of people, and places. And yet she very seldom lapses into sentimental slop." (Satpathy1999:21).

Budding poets of Mizoram, H. Ramdinthari and Mona Zote are very nostalgic of the Mizo landscape. Ramdinthari in her poems paints her environment in the hue of her imagination and deep sense of reality. [Das 2004(b): 13]. The Mizo hills, valleys, and extremely enticing nature find lucid and deeply romantic depiction in her lines:

The sky is black and blue tonight until
 stars hang up their lights from the
 treetops
 lit by stray lights.....
 soon voices leave the black cobalt street,
 whispers of empty rivers
 and bird cries in crescendo;
 the hill slope is dark, galvanic and barren (Nongkynrih et al. 2003: 195)

Through her maturing imagination, she has been pondering over man's attitudes to nature. Her nostalgia revolves round the landscape of Mizoram. She finds the human habitations as well as the green surroundings very charming in her colourful imagination and depicts them realistically: "For us the fogged lights of green leaves/ and the thick lamp-post of crushed boulders/ are antipodes where we build our huts."(ibidem 197)

The other Mizo poet, Mona Zote exposes her love of nature in her serene, sincere and nostalgic expressions. She feels the feelings of the elements of nature as human feelings. As such she speaks that snakeberries "are shy and will often hide under a mass/of larger leaves. /They look/
 like drops of blood/from a deer's flank. And so sweet. (ibidem 199).

She is very sentimental and her lines reflect a religious environment among the hemming hills under the sky:

Thin-skinned October/
 With its cold religious air Eyes of coal/
 Veins of ice/
 And the dark-enfolded insects /
 Go to sleep insects/
 Go to sleep/
 O Allah she thinks of Jesu/
 When out of the honeycomb of right church drums busily advertise/
 The high percentage of faith. (ibidem 204).

A prominent poet of Nagaland, Temsula Ao, is lover of nature and is a nature-poet par excellence. The pristine cultural and physical ecology of Meghalaya, Nagaland and other parts of Northeast and the sufferings of women haunt her vision. As a strong champion of the women and poor, she hails them to be ‘the blessed beings’:

Woman/
 Nature fashioned her thus./
 To bear the burden/
 To hold the seed/
 And feed/
 Every other need/
 But hers. (ibidem 22)

In many of her poems, she laments the destruction of nature and erosion of nature’s riches. She laments for the forest which was once verdant, virgin, and vibrant with tall trees as those have now been depleted. She is obsessed with absence of sweet melody of birds’ songs. Man’s atrocity on nature has resulted in the fury of the storms which is ravaging man’s habitations and the rest of the nature. The poet reveals her grief over the sufferings of mother-earth:

With the evidence of
 her rape.
 As on her breasts the
 elephants trample the
 lorries rumble
 loaded with her treasures
 Bound for the mills
 At the foothills (ibidem 45).

The persona is also infuriated with the drastic changes in nature. The river flowing with sweet gurgling sound with little fishes growing big on her bosom has dried. The deer, while tired and thirsty, was taking rest and quenching thirst with crystal mouthfuls, is now upset with muddy and choked river and is distressed. There are unnatural ways of fishing:

Choking with the remains
 of her sister
 The forest.
 No life stirs in her belly now.
 The bomb
 And the bleaching powder
 Have left her with no tomorrow (ibidem 46).

Man's cruelty to the lushness, sap and beauty of the earth has destroyed the surrounding serenity and thus all pervading perversion and disappointment prevail here and we have no other alternative than to lament the fate of the Mother Earth:

Alas for this earth
 Thus ravaged
 Stripped of her lushness

And her sap
 Her countenance
 Furrowed and damaged
 like a fading beauty
 Touched by age
 Her substance Exposed
 and crumbling ...
 To silt into the ocean
 And sand into the desert,
 Leaving her
 Old and decrepit
 Before her time (ibidem 46-47)

The persona reveals the mystery of ecology by singing of Jatinga, a place in Assam, where migratory birds congregate and commit suicide en masse. The secrets of nature and the realities make the poet feel that those birds come here to be immortal by dying together:

What leads you there
 O you immortal Birds?
 The strength
 Of your tiny wings
 or the dying cries
 Of your singing throats? (ibidem 48)

The Ao Origin myths about the glory of *Lungterok* (literally six stones), a place in the village called *Chungliyimti* in the Ao area of Nagaland, where it is supposed that the forefathers of the Aosemerged out of the earth, who were the worshippers of the 'Ecology' and were called the "Stone people":

The worshippers Of
 unknown, unseen
 Spirits
 Of trees, forests
 Of stones, and rivers,
 Believers of soul
 And its varied forms.
 (ibidem 50).

Temsula as an ethnic poet from hills, is a significant hill poet as the culture of hills find ample exposition in her verse. The poems on hills expose the ecological inequilibrium caused by the human nuisances and industrialisation in the modern times, which has been havoc to our future:

The sounds and sights
 Have altered
 In my hills
 Once they hummed
 With bird song
 And happy gurgling brooks
 Like running silver
 With shoals of many fish....
 (ibidem 48-49).

The elements of nature, which have been exploited by men, now protest in the voices and verses of the poet. This shows the poet's sympathetic responses to the nature. The non-humans have made to expose human sentiments. A monolith, which now stands at a village gate claims of its dissatisfaction and ignominy. So in its prayer, it says to other elements of nature not to tell its beloved about its outcast state:

And my beloved queries
 Just tell her
 I have gone to my glory
 But please, please, never
 Tell her the story
 Of my ignominy (2003: 5)

A priest of nature, Temsula Ao has truly given a picture of her land's ecology in her poetry. A blithe singer of lyrical ballads, she is a dreamer of an ecofriendly environment in the progress of the nation. To adopt technology with a human face linking development with culture to boost cultural ecology, Temsula Ao presents her ecofeminist-humanist-sermons in her songs.

Another strong voice, Nini Vinguriau Lungalang swims through the course of poetry with her sensibilities of tribal way of life, neglected people, and the Naga heritage [Das 2000(a): 151]. The myriad changes in the environment over the years surprise and obsess her. She remembers her utopian golden morning years and feels that she would not be able to get back those days again:

To turn back time and live again,
 I would not change a day, a year
 No: not even that wayward tear or wince of pain,
 For every breath that I have drawn
 Lent its own moment to the sum of me (1994: 1).

She is nostalgic of those early years of life when the environment was evergreen at par with her greenness. Those days seemed perpetual at that time but at present they have been nowhere leaving her helpless in her loneliness:

I look back on the morning years
 That have tricked like water ,
 Through my uncaring young fingers,
 when I only delighted in the touch and taste
 Warmth and coolth of those sunlit, perpetual- seeming days: (ibidem).

According to the traditional faith, Mountains are ancestors of the Naga people. The poet in her deep reverence for the mountains advises her race to rever the mountain 'Puliebadze' which is ten kilometres away from Kohima, by removing their habitations from the sacred hill and by worshipping her:

Stern sentinel trees silently guard
 the secret pulse that throbs beneath the skirts
 Of ancient ancestress Puliebadze....
 Swiftly remove yourself from holy ground, for shame!...
 like holy incense, sanctify the air again
 on ancient ancestress Puliebadze.....(1990:9)

Ecological devastations and degenerations during our times are the important concerns of Monalisa Changkija (1960–) who has reacted against man's atrocity on nature and women. As a sentinel of time and the cultural and political climate of the land of her birth in one of her poems, Monalisa has protested and challenged the manipulators who have spoiled the peace and prosperity her mother-land. Her protest prompts the citizens to be bold and to come forward to discipline ourselves for the better future.

Yes, I've seen our rice fields
 turn into factories and hills
 reduced to barren brown our
 rivers have dried

and our once sparkling fish
 lie dead on sandy banks.....
 But I wonder why you remain silent
 When I say we are hungry (Nongkynrih et al 2003: 216)

Easterine Kire (Iralu), the first poet and fictionist from Nagaland who tried her hand poetry in English, mingles her vision of past with the current realities. She reflects the erosions of environment and explores the folklore of the land about the culture of abundance of her mother-land till the unexplainable tragedy that intruded her mother-land of plenty in the shape of the Evil:

Keviselie speaks of a time
 when her hills were untamed
 her soil young and virgin
 and her warriors worthy
 the earth had felt good
 and full and rich and kind to his touch.
 Her daughters were seven,
 with the mountain air in their breaths and
 hair the colour of soft summer nights
 every evening they would return
 Their baskets overflowing
 with the yield of the land
 then they would gather round
 and their songs filled all the earth (ibidem 219).

In Indian English writings from the Northeastern region, poets from Nagaland like Easterine Kire, Temsula Ao, Monalisa Changkija and Nini Lungalang have written some bio-regional narratives voicing their ecofeminist ideals.

Rajendra Bhandari, the lone poet from Sikkim who writes in English and translates from Nepali, pigments his landscape with myriad mysteries. The stars, streams, flowers, trees and creatures of the surroundings are the myths and means of explorations of his emotions and feelings. He mystifies the nature by assigning human attributes to the aspects of nature:

The naked sky is the witness.
 Sultry sun is the witness.
 These words,
 I haven't coughed out
 from nowhere.....
 I haven't materialised these lines
 by the sleight of my hand.
 Reclaiming them from sliding land
 I've lifted them from
 the forests, the lowlands,
 the grainfields, the cliffs (2000: 19/ 2003: 72).

He is sympathetic to the subalterns: the poor and downtrodden. He makes Mother Nature a subaltern. Depicting the poverty of a girl and her parents, he consoles himself with step taken up by the girl and rejoices in the triumph of the subaltern:

In the dark corner of the street,
 the girl has opened a shop
 going hungry for many days
 At last she has learnt a trade,
 Trembling from the death-bed
 her father spat at the sky once
 Shedding many a tear
 the mother hid her face
 in her two palms. (1992: 23)

Our unkindness to nature results in our sorrow. The poet reacts to loneliness during the rains and hailstorm, when the nature turns violent isolating the man in shivering and solitude, which is supposed to be nature's reaction to man's insensibility:

Hostile is this loneliness to me.
 The past and present have grabbed me.
 History has assaulted me brutally, my dear!
 Wounded all through the body, I'm here (2000: 21).

Bhaskar Roy Barman from Tripura depicts the environmental, eco-marxist and ecocentric and anthropocentric reactions on the modern human's strides and exploitation of nature. Recurrence of the themes of river, stream, mountain, tree, temple, priest, crow, stone and other forms of ecology is found in many of his poems. Through the images of river and several forms of nature, the poet sincerely exposes the hard life of the tribes and their happy singing life in the midst of all hardships:

The river knows not how
 it has come to be called a river,
 Know though it does where it was born,
 Since its birth on the mountain top
 It has been cascading down the mountain
 Through groups of stones
 Spread out down the path
 While treading its way it sings forth
 into existence (Roy Barman 1)

The multiple difficulties, sorrow-stricken rural life, and the life of the tribes who have been driven away from the plains of Tripura by the Bengali refugees of Bangladesh, the tribal rites and practices, the harvest activities and the surrounding

environment find recurrent exposition in his poetry and he is fond of presenting the life and activities of these simple-hearted tribes:

I resumed wending my way towards the village, On my
 ears impinged the sounds
 That emanate from beating of tomtoms...
 Danced round heaps of crop gathered on a courtyard.
 I remembered it was time farmers brought crops home. (ibidem 35).

The poets of Northeast India are sentinels of time, culture and climate of all affairs. Ecology being their prime concern in their quest for identity, they have explored their sentiments and revealed their views about the transitions in natural environment over the years for several reasons. All have sympathetically gone deep into the environmental concerns for a revival of the glorious past of the evergreen nature.

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CHAPTER – III

Matrix of Ecology, Ecofeminism and Mysticism in Poems of Rabindranath Tagore

Spiritually blessed, myriad talented personality poet and prophet, Rabindranath Tagore is a tremendous personality endowed with the unique distinction of being awarded the first ever Nobel Prize among the Indians for literature. For his great aesthetic talent, he also possesses unflinching and undwindling universal acclaim and admiration, which is undoubtedly eternal. As he was blessed with affluent fortune and aristocratic culture, he was also always receptive to the captivating appeal of the world of God, Man and Nature, diversity of interests and priorities prevailed in the lives of his ancestors. Hence Rabindranath naturally inherited the great sense of dignity and penchant for ambition for the search for great aesthetic heights which considered his identity.

In his adulthood he was endowed with grand spiritual values which he acquired from the rich tradition of his family background. Rabindranath was blessed with the privilege of serene atmosphere of Shantiniketan (Abode of Peace). Afterwards his ecstasy for poetry was prominently exposed through his great number of works of poetry and prose which were published in India and abroad.

With all his spiritual and cultural training and exposure, he was powerfully drawn to Indian devotional poetry. His *Sandhya Sangit* (Evening Songs) was received with remarkable appreciation when it was published. The poems of this collection are highly mystical having divine inspiration. As nature poems these poems expose the ecofeminist notes. Though these poems hail nature, without having much about man's recurrent attempt at corrupting and polluting nature, yet these poems expose the deep ecological values in revealing the poet's realization of understanding the greatness of

nature. He was acclaimed by Bankim Chandra as a potential great. His brother Jyotirindranath and his wife influenced him tremendously at that moment. Rabindranath was fortunate to have a sister-in-law who was a mother like figure to him in enthusing him.

Among other many influences on Tagore, Viharilal Chakravarti is worth mentioning. Although underrated, this man showed to Tagore and his sister-in-law, genuine lyrical inspiration. The other great influence on him was the Vaishnava lyrical poetry, which gave to the poet resilience to follow a virgin path in the field of art and poetry. Rabindranath Tagore was undeniably influenced by the English romanticists Byron, Shelley, Keats, Wordsworth and Victorian masters, Tennyson and Browning. He also treasured profound admiration for Shakespeare, Milton, Sir Thomas Browne and Pope. (Iyengar 1992: 100). Tagore was not a voracious reader, but he could create lyrics of astounding quality. In spite of many writings, the seven thousand lines of verse he composed before he was eighteen bear the testimony to that fact. The more remarkable factor in his career is that he maintained that eloquence and proliferation for the greater part of his life.

As his reputation spread to every nook and corner, he also developed diversity in interest. His courage and adaptability were constantly put under the scanner. His wife Mrinalini's presence created a congenial atmosphere for Tagore to explore new heights in literature. Tagore was all incorrigible romantic who did not need any romantic stimulus, what he needed was an antidote and his wife provided just that to him. So, lyrics, plays, stories, novels, and essays ceaselessly flowed from his pen.

He was a firm believer in freedom and joy. He equally believed in the harmony and unity of all existence. At the time the tragic demise of his wife left him deconsolate with his five children. A series of touching lyrics ensued to commemorate her death and Tagore named his compositions as *Smaran* (Remembrance). His wife's death was followed by the premature death of his second daughter, Renuka. But despite these setbacks and overwhelming grief, Tagore's invulnerability never dwindled and these

unfortunate incidents failed to undermine his spirit. *Smaran* being the sorrowful songs was not devoid of nature elements. There were great evidences of mystical strains, his love for the serene environment and the feminine virtues of nature. Hence in all his writings the virtues of nature are superbly exposed.

During the Swadeshi movement, Tagore had not been mute participant of the National Movement, then he jumped into it. He was in the frontline of the movement, he delivered lectures in congregations, organized processions and composed a large number of songs, which were sung all over Bengal. Soon it was perceived that difference of opinions existed between Tagore and other politicians. These writings had wide ecological implications from various eco-critical perspectives. He considered that 'Swaraj' was not a boon to be begged, it was a right to be obtained. During this period mystical works like *The King of the Dark Chamber*, *Gitanjali* and *The Post Office* followed from his creative mind. All these works signify the transition in his life.

In May 1912, nevertheless he gained complete recovery and went to England. During this period, he was greeted there as a seer with a universal message. Tagore showed his translations of Bengali compositions to Rothenstein during his visit to England and Rothenstein gave them to W.B Yeats and many others. He received great acclaim for the charm and originality of his works. The best minds of the day, Southerstein, the greatest painter of England, W.B Yeats, the greatest poet of England, A.C. Bradley, the greatest critic of England, *The Times Literary Supplement*, the greatest English journal and a number of other admirers and enthusiasts of poetry expressed genuine appreciation of his poetry (Deva 1992:9).

His magnum opus *Gitanjali* is the greatest eco-poem. The publication of *Gitanjali* (1912) in English left the English readers bewildered. They were enamoured by the profundity of thought and also by the use of delectable and intoxicating language. The incredible success of *Gitanjali* led to thirteen reprints between March and December 1913.

The Lectures he delivered in America were published as *Sadhana* by Macmillan, along with *Gardener*, *The Crescent Moon* and *Chitra*. All these works bear testimony of greatest ecological and ecomystical values. In November, 1913 Tagore received the information that he had been chosen for the award of Nobel Prize. He was no longer a poet of Bengal alone, but he was acknowledged as a laureate of India and Asia. As the years went by he became more and more a legendary figure. His flowing beard and delicate white robes gave him a distinct look. He looked more like a monk of the Upanishadic time than a great modern poet. The Upanishadic messages ingrained in his works bear great ecological significance of upholding the greatness of divine nature.

His love for painting and developmental works were also ecologically significant. In May, 1932, he inaugurated an exhibition of pictures in Paris, followed by exhibitions in Copenhagen, Moscow and other places. Tagore's tour of Soviet Russia is significant where he received a warm welcome. He applauded the struggle of Russian people to eradicate ignorance and poverty. But the methods of force and lack of criticism to achieve their purpose were criticized by him. The struggle for elimination of poverty is also important and is a significant aspect of ecological movements. Before he took his last breath on 7 August 1941, the poet had composed an apt song for the event which is prophetic:

In front lies ocean of peace,
 Launch the bat, Helmsman,
 You will be the comrade ever
 May the mortal bonds perish,
 May the vast universe take him in its arms,
 And may he know in his fearless heart
 The Great Unknown, (qtd in Iyengar 1987:8-9)

Rabindranath Tagore stands out as the most versatile great of his time. His prolific and wide range of writing left no genre of literature unattempted. Poems, novels, plays, short stories, various kinds of prose and miscellaneous writings followed

ceaselessly from his fertile heart and mind. Although he left no genre of literature untouched, he is mostly acclaimed for his achievement as a poet.

Tagore's poetry is not static, but it is evolutionary. There seems to be conspicuous development of thought and diversity in his whole poetic career. The development of Tagore's poetry can be traced at the various stages of life. In Pre-*Gitanjali* period, poems like *The Awakening of the Waterfall* and *Evening Songs* are quite significant. Both the poems shun gloom and despondency and a sense of joy prevails. Tagore was twenty-one years of age when he composed the poem, *Evening Songs*. The next two poems, *Picture and Songs* and *Sharps and Flats* deal with the theme of the newly awakened consciousness of reality. Some poems of Tagore deal with the social problems of the day. 'Basundhare' in *Sonar Pari* is one of his nature poems of this period. It is not its mere remembrance of communion with nature, but also fills longing to dwell amidst nature. Though Tagore appreciated the calmness and tranquility of nature, some poems also depict the destructive aspect of nature. "Barsha-Shesh" and 'Sea-Waves' which appeared in the book entitled *Kalpna* and *Manasi* respectively treat the terrible aspect of nature. Tagore has depicted nature in all aspects. The first stage of his poetic career abounds in natural phenomena with all its ingredients.

The initial period is followed by the most eventful period of Tagore's life. Whatever he wrote during this time was overshadowed by the magnum opus *Gitanjali*. His poetic talent and exposure reached new heights as he was acclaimed all over the world. *Gitanjali* is a collection of lyrics on God, Man and Nature undefined by his romantic longing for a communion with the divine. The word *Gitanjali* means an offering of songs. Its central theme is the realization of the divine through self-purgation and service to humanity.

The songs in *Gitanjali* are mainly poems of Bhakti of the great Indian tradition deliberating on the Indian mystic and ecomystic traditions. Tagore's poems own their inspiration to the Upanishadic doctrine, which envisages the world and entire creation

as having been born out of joy, residing in joy and returning to joy at last. The whole book is endowed with rich poetry of great significance. It leaves readers in a fit of contemplation. Even the opening lines seem to create a palpable influence on people:

Thou hast made me endless, such is thy
pleasure. This frail vessel thou emptiest
again and again, and fillest it ever with
fresh life.(Tagore 1991:1)

Gitanjali is a collection of hundred and three poems. It is ornamented with simplicity and sublimity. Lofty ideas and noble sentiments are mingled with striking images to provide solidity to the work. *Gitanjali* was originally composed in Bengali, but Tagore transcreated his original poems into English. So the English *Gitanjali* is not a literal and comprehensive translation of Bengali *Gitanjali*. The English poems are true translations, expressing the main ideas of the Bengali poems and which may be regarded as fresh compositions.

When *Gitanjali* was published in 1912, the whole world including the Westerners was struck with wonder. This collection of innovative poems rendered them speechless in admiration. That is why aptly in 1913 Tagore received the Nobel Prize for this laudable and peerless work. It compelled all the greatest men of letters to marvel and contemplate of his new set of ideas and sentiments.

Some important poems of Tagore like *The Gardener* and *the Crescent Moon* include his intimate moments of life narrating personal sorrows philosophizing the general human sorrows eternally suffered by many. Thus in due course the suppressed grief of Tagore became intenser than expressed grief.

The Crescent Moon being a significant children's book presents a strong mysticism in children like Wordsworth and Walter de la Mare. Tagore found in children the beauty, innocence, humour, charity and a kind of ancient wisdom which he celebrated in his songs.

The Gardener as very significant work next only to *Gitanjali*. Almost all the poems deal with sheer love, which is worldly as well as divine, though it is hard to distinguish in Tagore's poetry. All the emotions of love like agony, despair, delight, and fulfilment are woven together into a garland of memorable songs. Quite a few of the poems and songs in *The Gardener* are seen to be as good as the best in *Gitanjali*. Yet the collection as a whole is devoid of intensity and organic unity which is reminiscent of the great work.

During the last decade of his life, Tagore still tried to experiment and explore new concepts and new forms of verse. He published the books of prose poems, *Punascha*, *Sesh-Saptak*, *Shyamaliand Patraput*. In these poems also his love of nature and various aspects of nature and greatness of nature are depicted. In these autobiographical writings, realistic comments get intermingled. Towards the end of his life, Tagore again became a singer, though a sad music of humanity loomed large on the poems. He composed *Prantik* (*Borderline*, 1938), *Rogsajya* (*On the Sick-Bed*, 1940), *Arogya* (*Recovery*, 1941) and the posthumous *Sesh Lekha* (*Last Poems* 1942). These poems of last stage in Tagore's life are underrated because of their declining poetic appeal. They are prone to bitter criticism from various critics. Here, Tagore's fecundity and creativity seem to have loss even their last elements.

Rabindranath Tagore remains one of the greatest ever poets to explore the genre of poetry. But the immense bulk of prose writing he has left behind also epitomizes his excellence and achievement as a successful writer of prose. There are the novels, the short stories and plays which are in a different category altogether.

Rabindranath Tagore's image bears a close resemblance to a luminary in the literary firmament. He stands out conspicuously as a spontaneous poet, an accomplished playwright, a delightful novelist and a precise writer of short stories. But all these attributes of his literature are endowed with the supremacy of his art. Tagore's various forms of art are perceived in his depiction of love imagery. With immaculate concept of beauty he had close affinity with Nature.

One of the major forms of art in Tagore's poetry is the depiction of love. The theme of love exists everywhere; it is ornamented with authenticity because of the poet's personal experiences. Love provides him joy and fills his entire being with admiration for beauty. In his poems, Tagore is found to have been associated with various forms of love. The love of a mother for her child, the love of a husband for his wife, love of a lover for his beloved and love of a devotee for his God, all find expression in Tagore's works.

Tagore's early volumes of verse *Kadi O Kamal* and *Manasi* contain his bold proclamation of personal love on a real physical plane which eventhrilled his critics. His *Gitanjali* celebrates the victory of divine love over worldly love and attraction. Due to Tagore's concern for Victorian ethical bias, the profound influence of his father, the restrictions imposed by his brother, he was always in ascetic recoil. The theme of love and womanhood invariably got transformed into a desire of communion with the divine. In *Gitanjali*, Tagore gives full vent to his artistic and lyrical genius in portraying the undwindling love for God through amorous imagery. Tagore is a firm believer that even the forms of Love are the instances of the most glorious love, that is, love for God.

Tagore's magnum opus, *Gitanjali* comprises a series of abundant imagery which reveals his diving love. In the, very first poem of his peerless creation, we have the image of a flute. The poet compares himself to a little flute and he sings in the company of the Almighty who is the great musician. The poet is like a living flute which feels ecstatic at the touch of its lord:

The little flute of a reed thou hast carried over hills and
dales, and breathed through it melodies eternally new.
(Ibid.)

Tagore's obsession for divine love, runs upto the last poem of *Gitanjali*. In this poem he even surrenders everything in pursuit of divine love. Like *Gitanjali*, *The Gardener*, *FruitGathering*, *Lover's Gift* also contain instances of Tagore's passion for love. The *Gardener* is an epitome of outstanding sentiments of love. K. R.S Iyengar says, "It is in the main a feast of love poetry —with a human rather than of divine slant, though with a poet like Tagore the borderline between the two is apt to be tantalizingly indistinct".(1992:116)

Tagore's poetry is not only a depiction of sacred love, but also is also presented as a warm human passion which thrives in physical attraction. It is not a feeble sensation, but a mighty emotion which determines the outcome of various human relations. Like his treatment of love, the concept of beauty and affinity with nature are also the keynotes of Tagore's art. All sorts of beauties and charms of earth and the sky, moon, and the stars, the sun and the sunrise, trees and hills, birds and flowers attracted his poetic Imagination. (Abidi 1987:109)

Tagore's concept of beauty is largely attached to his affinity with nature. Apart from physical and divine beauty, his works are blessed with natural beauty. In his passionate and profound love of nature, Tagore can be put alongside the great Romantic poet, William Wordsworth. His collection, *The Gardener* contains some notable nature poems. In these poems, he depicts beautiful images of flowers, honey bees, the chirping of the birds, filling of the pitcher at the fountain, the green and yellow rice fields and various other elements of nature.

Tagore was an artist par excellence. Without his excellent skills he would not have been the great literary genius as he is acknowledged today. He enriched the

modern Indian life in several ways by instilling modern outlook in the Indian minds. As such Mahatma Gandhi rightly hailed him as “the Great Sentinel” (Naik 1987:58). *Gitanjali* is magnum opus is a canonical eco-poem. This song offering to the Almighty is ecofeminist, ecomystic and full of multiple ecological concepts. The one hundred three songs exposing myriad moods of the poet are truly revelation of Man’s relationship with nature in various seasons, states of life and the like. The poet says, “I am here to sing thee songs” (9). The poems reveal layers of meanings endlessly glorifying the Nature and her creator, the Almighty Lord.

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CHAPTER – IV

Ecological and Eco-mystical World in the Poems of Northeast Indian Poets Writing in English

Contemporary poetry in English from India's Northeast has multi-pronged values as emerging voices on myriad ways of search for identity. It is an expression of an individual poetic self, and at the same time, it is the saga of the variegated cultures and people of the region in general. It presents the series of colourful images of the mountains, hills, rivers, myths and legends, tradition and culture, and multi-ethnic people of the region. The thematic of the multi-ethnic poetry of the region ranges from geography to politics, myths and legends to ecology. Multiple ecological concerns are notable characteristics of poetry from this part of the country. Identity crisis, secessionist strategies, sense of alienation, protests for racial autonomy and the like are some of the dominant features of contemporary politics in the Northeast. It has been constant conscious application of ecological perspectives by the poets as a means for an assertion of identity in their works.

Constant experiments with style, technique, thematics, or language are marked in the works of the contemporary poets from this region writing in Assamese, Bengali, Manipuri, English, or in any vernacular language of this region. Their poetry deals with the psychological and social difficulties of modern life and living and seems to be concerned of the subjective realities and predicament of their people in particular, and humankind in general. The eight different states of the region, although there has been marked a common tendency to club them under one tag, the 'Northeast', hugely varies from each other in tradition, culture, language, and religion. But in spite of this diversity, it is possible to locate some common grounds, some shared values and concerns of these writers. Besides a number of issues like identity crisis, search for roots, or contemporary socio-political atmosphere of the region, it is the biodiversity of the region, and ecological concerns of the writers predominantly seem to unite these multi-ethnic thinkers in a common platform.

A reading of contemporary poetry in English from Northeast India makes one realize the eco-awareness of the writers. This awareness plays a pivotal role in their search for identity. The deep sense of ecology plays a vital role to provide a common ground to these poets, to bind themselves together in a common goal towards the quest for identity. Their works also reflect their serious concerns of various ecological issues such as large-scale deforestation, coal and uranium mining, ethnic violence, insurgency and counter-insurgency operations — all that ultimately lead to the degeneration and degradation of ecology. Their poetry strongly advocates preservation of the biodiversity, which will pave the way of preserving their land, their native tradition and culture, and above all, their identity.

The works of translation into English from vernacular literatures have been enriching Indian poetry in English since its formative in the third decade of the 19th century. Important works like Praphulladatta Goswami's *Bihu Songs of Assam*, Hem Barua's *Modern Assamese Poetry*, 1960, Hiren Bhattacharya's *Ancient Gongs* (1985), Pradip Acharya's *Where Seas Meet* (1993), a collection of some of the lyrics of Bhupen Hazarika are some of the great attempts creating superb eco-poetry through translations.

The great practice of translating regional poems into English is also seen in other states of Northeast India. Poets, writers and translators like Robin S. Ngangom, Desmond L. Kharmawphlang, Kynpham Sing Nongkynrih, T. Bijoykumar Singh, Daisy Hasan, Paul Lyngdoh, Easterine Iralu, Rita Chakma, Kalyanbrata Chakraborti, Rameswar Bhattacharya, Dibyendu Nag, etc. have been contributed to the corpus of Indian Poetry in English with their original works as well as translations. Many of these people, who are genuinely representative poets of this region, claim critical attention also as translators. There are translations also of the folk songs of some of the tribes of Northeast India like the Hmars, Ao-Nagas, Zos, Darlongs Apatanis, Noktes or the indigenous people of Tripura speaking Kokborak. A proper documentation and publicity would draw a wide readership to these literary works and they would surely add a new dimension to the body of Indian Writing in English enlarging its existing domain.

The land of Arunachal Pradesh is enriched with different species of flora and fauna, mighty rivers, high mountain ranges and also with these varied tribes each one of whom having different languages, a vibrant culture and tradition of their own. Because of the presence of various tribes as well as varied species of flora and fauna, the region is blessed with a unique ecology. The poets from this region show ecological concerns in their poetry. Insurgency, identity crisis, a sense of alienation from the mainland are some of the dominant issues of the contemporary politics of Northeast India, and these have a resonance in contemporary poetical works of the Arunachalee poets like the poets from the other states of the region. There has been an urge of going back to their roots through their native culture and tradition. The ecology of the region has been consciously used by the poets as a means also for asserting an identity of their own.

Mamang Dai (1957-) selected to be an Indian Civil Servant who opted to become a full-time journalist as well as an environmental activist, is a reputed writer and a poet of Arunachal Pradesh who has been awarded the first ever Verrier Elwin Literary Award by the Government of Arunachal Pradesh and also has been awarded Padmashri by the Government of India and several other awards. As a nature poet, she reveals life in Arunachal Pradesh, its natural beauty, tradition and culture of different local tribes, tribal myths and legends in her works. She is proud of the rich heritage of her land and believes that only it can save the tribal communities from the modern degeneration.

A keen explorer of heritage, Mamang seems to be a sentinel of traditional tribal values. Environmental crisis, profound serenity in nature, and many other indigenous problems have been her major concerns. In her poetry the 'river' becomes a metaphor for life. Mamang Dai explores her identity through the river. This is seen also in the works of other poets of Northeast as 'river' is a central image in Indian poetry in English in general as Indian English poets are mostly river poets.

She speaks of the river:

The river of dreams
 penance and pilgrimage,
 linking life's designs
 will your remember
 the golden chain
 that linked us
 in a dream? (ibidem 65)

Or again we can see in her poems animist faith of the importance of serene surrounding as she feels:

The river has soul.
 It knows, stretching past the town, from the
 first drop of rain to dry earth
 and mist on the mountaintops,
 and river knows
 the immortality of water (ibidem 29)

Eco-mystical elements are in abundance in the works of the poets from Arunachal Pradesh. Nature has a mystical presence in their works and there has been an attempt to explore through the mysteries of nature. This reaffirms the understanding that nature is not merely a passive object, but is a dynamic force that plays a pivotal role in shaping an ecological consciousness. Such a consciousness is the need of the hour when ecology is under threat primarily due to man-made disasters in the environment.

Such an eco-mystical consciousness can develop a new ethics in human beings that teaches to live in a perfectly ecological way by respecting and preserving each and every creature of nature. This concept of Creation Spirituality is present in the poetry of Arunachal Pradesh like in the poetry of the Northeastern states in general. The poetic world of Mamang Dai is full of eco-mystical images:

The yellow mustard is a field of gold. The
 slanting sun promises to return
 tilting the day like a temptation....
 Then ask the fences of love
 About this enigma.(ibidem 56)

An eco-mystical sense enables the human voice even to think about the birds,
 which have a different entity but a similar self with human beings:

I thought you loved me.
 How sad it is,
 this spring sky,
 the caresses of
 mist and vapour
 Why do wild birds cry? (ibidem 54).

Traditional values and recent ecological principles like Spiritual Ecology or
 Creation Spirituality teaches us for harmonious co-existence with the world of nature.
 Traditional tribal societies have been living with nature with a sense of awe and wonder
 mystifying its overall entity. The following lines from a poem by Dai are reflective of
 this spirit and have aneco-mystical perspective:

Without speech
 we practiced a craft,
 eaving imprints on sky walla
 coding the trailing mist,
 in silent messages
 across the vast landscape (ibidem 13)

Tribal folklores, myths and legends have also been explored which heightens the effect of ecomysticism in the poetic world of Mamang Dai. Many of the tribal communities of Arunachal Pradesh believe that human beings and tigers are born brothers, so the killing of a tiger is regarded as equivalent to that of killing a human being. This exhibits the age – old eco consciousness among the tribal communities and this has been explored in one of Dai’s poems, where there is an appeal to tiger to have mercy on its brother, i.e. human beings:

Yumlam Tana (1976-), is another important poet from Arunachal Pradesh. In Tana’s poem entitled “The men and the Tiger” this tribal myth is again comes to life. (Tana 2003: 14-15).

Yumlam Tana’s poetry is rooted in Arunachalee culture and tradition, particularly the traditional world of the Nyishi community— the tribal community he belongs to. His poetry explores Nyishi legends, folklores, rites and rituals and also the ecology of his native land in quest for identity and root. Search for identity, which is a significant feature of postcolonial literature, is a recurring theme in the works of the poets from Northeast India. In one of Tana’s poem entitled “The Kurta and the Pyjama” we mark a search as well as an assertion of identity:

I write in English
 Which is not my language
 You see, I am a Nyishi
 A tribal claiming to be a man.
 I am all humanity
 With no geographical boundary
 No social restrictions, no biological limitations
Nothing to divide me from my fellow men. (Tana 2003: 13)

Tana is also concerned of the veils of mysteries in nature as is seen in his poem entitled “Superstitions”:

The blind waters all over
 The darkness hides such mysteries
 That even the colours of day
 Fail to lighten the tone of its hue...(ibidem 15)

There has been a myth among different tribal communities, including the Nyishis of Arunachal Pradesh that tigers and human beings are brothers. Although these two brothers have developed physical features different from each other, they are potentially same and united with one another. This myth is the manifestation of the philosophy, which in recent terminology, is known as Spiritual Ecology or Creation Spirituality. It inspires us to feel oneness with each and every object of creation. This sense of oneness would inspire the human world to honour the sacred in creation.

Tana, as a poet who is deeply rooted to his native tradition and culture, explores this myth in one of his poems and seems to re-invent a contemporary meaning in it. It shows his ecological concern as a writer. This re-creation of a world of his own exploring traditional myths and legends is also suggestive of his conscious use of ecology as a tool for obtaining a space for himself — a distinctive feature of contemporary writing from Northeast India. In that poem Tana, while exploring the myth also presents a picture of the ecology of his native land:

My brother, my mother nestled so fondly on her bosom
 Singing lullabies in the night
 And when away to the *jhum* fields in the mountains
 We played various games around the house.
 He was my playmate. He was my nurse.
 And I was his soulmate in a world

Where my young mind could stretch
 The length and breadth of imagination....
 The Tsangpo flowing through the Dibang valley
 And the plains of India
 And Bangladesh
 At last in the ocean finds the solace of brotherhood. (ibidem 14-15)

Nature is a major thematic of the poets of Assam. Yet a concern for ecology is rare in their works in comparison to the poets of the other states of the Northeast. (Das, N. 2004:8). But a mystical tone is heard in the works of some of these poets. Bhupati Das is found to be one of such poets. In his first collection of poems *May I*, he deals with nature, its mysteries and the problems of human existence:

the lonely road
 I walk it
 alone
 counting the dead leaves
 falling
 vibrations
 of my thoughts
 ripple thro' them
 and
 make the dead leaves
 alive(Das 1998 : np)

There are existential phenomena mysteriously presented in his poems. In one of his poems entitled "my prison" this issue of existence is beautifully presented that is open to numerous interpretations:

she died
 with it
 my world
 died
 and
 i stopped living. (ibidem)

The strain of mysticism is further exemplified in the quoted lines from his second collection of poems entitled *life and beyond life*:

at the lost horizon
 the moon was dying
 in the arms of the elusive god
 the blood-red sun
 came out afresh
 ambushing the night
 and the pregnant dream
 undelivered
 she cried out god
 why are you silent. (Das 2004: np)

Poetry in English from Manipur have been enriched by the works of the poets like Robin S. Ngangom, R.K. Madhubir, Memchoubi, Saratchand Thiyam, Ilabanta Yumnam etc. Of all of them Robin S. Ngangom, the Shillong-based Manipuri poet can be called the most celebrated and the most representative one. Robin's poetry, like many of his fellow poets from the state is a kind of a nostalgic search for roots. There is a quest for identity through native tradition and culture. Tribal folklores and traditions have been explored through his poetry for asserting an identity that can be claimed as his own. Robin is also concerned of the problem of insurgency in the northeast in general, which, to a large extent, is responsible for the erosion of human values as well as degradation of the environment:

I hear a wicked war is
 now waged
 on our soil, and gory bodies dragged
 unceremoniously through our rice
 fields....
 I hear that freedom comes there, only
 if escorted by army men (Ngangom 1988: 10-11)

An ecofeminist tone is often heard in Robin's poetry. His poem entitled "To a Woman from Southeastern Hills" echoes this tone:

You, woman from southeastern hills, cloud-covered
 mystery, gliding on rain, deep drink of rice wine
 with eyes closed,
 child of the dancing bamboo, unction
 of ginger on the wagging tongue.
 Your voice is soft because mountain
 streams taught your heart.
 (Ngangom 2006:18)

This ecofeminist strategy can be felt in the works of other Manipuri poets also. Memchoubi's poem "My Beloved Mother" can be studied from such an angle where a mother who is 'serene as a deep mountain wood' and 'tenacious as the earth' is carrying her husband and son in a basket on the back. When she is asked why she is carrying them, she calmly replies:

How would they survive
 If not carried by me? (Memchoubi 2003:102)

Here the mother can also be the ‘Mother Earth’ as both of them sustain life. In another Manipuri poet Saratchand Thiyam’s poem entitled “Sister” the vulnerable condition of a female in a male-dominated society is intelligently presented:

Sister, I won’t allow you to go
 Every road is reverberating
 With the deafening utterance of boots.
 Hide inside the house,sister
 Don’t you go at all. (Thiyam 2003:104)

Love of nature and motherland is amply exemplified in the other poets of Manipur as in the poet Thangjam Ibopishak who explores the environment in his poem “Manipur, Why Shouldn’t I Love Your Hills, Marshes, Rivers, Fields, Open Spaces”:

Manipur, I love your hills, marshes, rivers,
 Greenfields, meadows, blues sky.
 Why shouldn’t I love them?
 I never had a quarrel with them,
 There’s no resentment. (Ibopishak 2003:88)

The poets are equally aware of the ecological pollution and degradation of their land like R.K. Bhubonsana who voices his concern for the ecological degradation caused by a dam constructed under the Loktak Project:

Loktak Project wastes paddy fields, fishes
 Submerges by water
 Ruins people
 Deprives people of homes

Denies people of working space
 Gets on one's nerves. (Bhubonsana 2003:75)

A mystical sense regarding nature as well as a sense of belonging to it is also pervading in their poetry:

Hill, you and I have seen
 only upheaval since our birth.
 When I was torn from the universal womb
 I echoed your silent cry. (Ngangom 1994:39)

Poetry in English from Nagaland started with the publication of Easterine Kire's *Kelhoukevira* (1982). Temsula Ao's *Songs That Tell* in 1988, *Songs That Try to Say* (1992), *Songs of Many Moods* (1995), *Songs from Here and There* (2003), and *Songs from the Other Life* (2007) are consistent attempts to explore traditional and modern ecological views. Besides Easterine and Temsula, some other representative poets in English from Nagaland are Nini Vinguriau Lungalang and Monalisa Changkija. These poets speak of universal human values in their poetry and also address some of the core issues of the region. There has been a search for roots in their works exploring through their native tradition and culture. In them the ecology of their land comes to life and it is used as a means of asserting an identity.

Ecology of their native land forms a central theme of their poetry. They celebrate the hills, mountains, rivers and forests of their land and are greatly concerned of the destruction of these, which has degraded the ecology. This ecological concern is seen in all of these poets:

The rivers are running red,
 The hillsides are bare
 And the seasons
 Have lost their magic. (Ao 1995:49)

Monalisa Changkija also shows this ecological concern:

Yes, I've seen own rice fields turn
 into factories and hills
 reduced to barren brown
 our rivers have dried
 and our once sparkling fish
 lie dead on sandy banks. (Changkija 2003:216)

Nature and women become synonymous in many occasions in their poetry. Nature is tortured and exploited like a woman tortured and exploited by the patriarchal society. Such ecofeministic treatments add a powerful dimension to the works of these poets. In one of her poems entitled "Lament for Earth" in her collection *Songs That Tell*. Temsula Ao presents the Earth as a woman who is raped and has a bleak future ahead:

No life stirs in her belly now
 The bomb
 And the bleaching powder
 Have left her with no tomorrow. (ibidem 46-47)

These poets in their works reflect the philosophy of cultural ecofeminism which is a response to the exploitation, domination and degradation of women as well as nature by the patriarchal society. Such concerns for environment using the principles of

recent ecocritical theories are predominantly seen in the works of the contemporary writers from Northeast India. This is what seems to make their writing canonical.

These poets are ecomystics in many occasions. They believe in a peaceful co-existence with nature. It has been traditionally believed that the mountains are the ancestors of the Naga people. In a poem entitled “On Puliebadze” Nini Vinguriau Lungalang expresses this traditional belief and emphasizes on living ecologically. Such sentiments reflect the ecomystical world of these poets:

Stern sentinel trees silently guard
 The secret pulse that throb beneath the skirts
 Of ancient ancestress Puliebadze.
 Walk with care: for here is holy ground,
 Let not your footfall sound further
 Thaw the crisping crush of twig or leaf!
 Let then the wisps of mist that stroke
 The flanks of old Puliebadze. (Lungalang 1994:46)

An urge for going back to the roots is noticed in contemporary poetry in English from Meghalaya. A host of poets from this region have been writing in English and have already attained a powerful, legitimate and a distinct voice of their own. Robin S. Ngangom, the Manipuri poet presently based in Shillong, Desmond Lee Kharmawphlang and Kynpham Sing Nongkynrih are the best known English poets from Meghalaya besides Ananya S. Guha, Esther Syiem, Donboklang Rynthathiang, Paul Lyngdoh, and Bevan L Swer. Almost all of them deal with the myths, legends, folklores and rich tradition of the land. In their poetry the natural beauty of Meghalaya is explored to the deepest extent. The conscious exploration of the ecology of their land is a means of asserting an identity. They seem to believe that the ecological degradation in their land is a threat not only to the environment alone, but also to their very identity. Kynpham Sing Nongkynrih’s poem written on the occasion of the then Prime Minister of India I.K. Gujral’s visit to Shillong depicts man’s insensibility against the nature:

When Prime Minister Gujral planned a
 visit to the city
 bamboos sprang up from pavements like a
 welcoming committee....
 Only the bamboos watched in silence
 too used to the antics of men. (Nongkynrih 2003:159)

All these ecological features are celebrated in the works of the poets from this region. They portray nature as a mysterious entity that has a profound note of mysticism behind its veil. Such portrayal of ecology in a broader canvass reaffirms their treatment of nature not merely as a passive object, but a hugely dynamic entity, full of vitality and energy, an important source of life and living. Almost all the poets from this region exhibit a strong ecological concern in their poetry. As if ecology becomes synonymous to their very existence and identity. Ananya S Guha, in his poem entitled “In Mawsynram” speaks of the ecology of Mawsyanam, the place in Meghalaya having the highest rainfall in the world:

In Mawsyanram the cloud capped hills
 Spiralled into a questioning loneliness
 Mawsyanam truly was a
 wonderous sight; (Guha 2003 :125)

Desmond Kharmawphlang in his poem “Ranikor” speaks of the ecology of his land as a medium through which he can have a peep into his ‘roots’. He is also referring to the Surma River, the river in Bangladesh bordering Meghalaya as this is also an important part of the ecology of the region:

How could the sweat and tears
 of my forefathers escape these hills
 to form silent rivers on the

plains of the Surma? (Kharmawphlang 2003:136)

The poets have been exploring through the folk-tales, myths and legends of the Khasis, the indigenous people of Meghalaya. These myths and legends show that nature has traditionally been an integral part of culture of this tribal community. It also reflects their age-old ecological consciousness conceptualizing what presently known as Deep Ecology. In Kynpham Sing Nongkynrih's poetry there seems to have a conscious use of these tribal myths and legends that reflects his ecological concern as well as becomes a means of asserting an identity. Nongkynrih's poem "Ren" is based on a Khasi folk story about a fisherman called Ren who is said to have fallen in love with a river nymph, and eventually, to have followed her into the river. And thus they are united both physically and spiritually. This folk tale celebrates the nature- human relationship that bears an ecomystical sense in it. That nature is a living entity with a deeply mystical aspect can be marked in the following lines of "Lucia", a poem by Almond D Syiem:

Girl, who arrived from yawning valleys
and hills where clouds perform rituals,
show me the highway of your palms,
let me take you to silent woods of mushroom
and herbs, wet leaves, of wild berries, moist earth. (Syiem 2003:173)

But this beautiful, mystical world of nature is under threat at present. The ecological chain of being has been disturbed due to reckless attitude of human beings. In the name of modernization and technological development nature has been exploited and used to the optimum limit. In order to meet their own selfish ends human beings started viewing nature just as an object forgetting the age-old bond they share with nature. This is a major environmental issue of present times and the poets from Meghalaya are seriously concerned of this. Uranium mining is a matter of grave concern in Meghalaya at present, which is very much responsible for environmental degradation. In a poem entitled "Domiasiat" by Paul Lyngdoh the issue of environmental degradation due to uranium mining is addressed?

Draped in the hill's Sunday attire,
 you have seen summers come and go
 and still cling to mother earth's womb,
 obscure, like the famed *tiewdohmaw* of the hills. Today, a
 cacophony of
 voices
 rouse you every morning---
 from the love –calls of the
 ancient thrush to be happy
 laughter of children,
 newly arrived,
 playing cricket on a makeshift ground.(Lyngdoh 2003:146)

A lamenting voice for the degeneration of the environment is heard also in
 Kynpham S.Nongkynrih:

The barren hills
 that bear the pockmarks
 of miners and a foolish people
 that burn and cut at will,
 looks as unremarkable
 as half-naked little brats. (Nongkynrih 1992:24).

These poets have shown their serious concerns for the damage of ecology. They are quite aware of the dire consequences of ecological degradation in the name of so-called progress and development. In them we mark the similar note of protest and resentment to that of many prolific writer-cum-environmental activists, who are also very much critical of the 'developmental agendas' of the government at the cost of a degenerated ecology. Because of its rich natural 'resources' India's Northeast has been the target of the colonizers who have adversely affected the ecology of the region. Recent technological developments have accelerated the pace degeneration in the

ecosystem of the region. Contemporary writing from the region has a strong voice of protest against such ecocidal activities and propounds an ecosophy that advocates ecological preservation sticking to the native traditional values.

The degeneration and exploitation of nature is like the exploitation of women since women as mother stand for nature. Myriad ecofeminist ideals find expression in their poetry where nature and women become almost similar. Desmond L Kharmawplang's poem "Pictures" reflects this spirit:

Lightning is happily licking the clouds,
and a light drizzle falls.
Your hair is wet, damp clothes
delicately sculpt your body.(Kharmawphlang 2003:135)

Almond D Syiem's "On top of a Hill" reverberates this ecofeminist ideal in the lines that follow:

I'm standing on top of a hill which is
bare like a naked women, whose breast
have been uncovered
by a ravishing madman.(Syiem 2003:174)

Esther Syiem, explores the ecofeminist and ecomystic ideals through a Khasi legend in order to present the nature- women relationship. In the said legend, the father of a beautiful girl organized a race for all her suitors who were to run up the hills, and the winner would marry her. The legend has a tragic end where the boy favoured by the girl, even after winning the race, could not marry her as he died owing to sudden burst of his heart due to heavy breathing though he won the victory. It is believed that the girl

decided to remain on the hill to mourn his death and her fate forever as has been told in the legend. The girl narrates to her father:

Father I know you decreed this for me. My
 destiny you wrote
 on these grassy steeps?....
 You've stalled me forever
 and the future is yours for the taking. (Syiem 2003:178)

The helpless girl here may easily be the representative of women in general, and her voice is the unattended voice of the women to the patriarchal society represented here by the father. Her voice may also be the voice of nature which is always kept suppressed by the essentially male-dominated human society. The suppression of women in an essentially patriarchal society can also be seen in the following lines by Indari Syiem Warjri:

The sons became men, royal in stature
 Having wisdom gifted by the gods
 They came to rule the misty hills;
 To dwell in pinewood mansions
 Where carpets of clouds
 And cloaks of rain
 Conserve the forests of the Khasi hills. (Warjri 2003: 190).

These poetic expressions are also reflective of the varied aspects of the ecology of the land. Human civilization has arrived such a stage that it seems to lose the power to listen to the voice of nature. It even does not hesitate to commodify nature for the sake of achieving so-called prosperity and development:

For sale this battered, artistic land with its lucre-laden earth,
 our precious minerals, medicinal herbs, rare orchids,
 and trees and fields and waters,....
 our young, nubile girls, beautiful like the land itself,.... our
 cumbersome anachronistic tribal roots.....
 our pride, values, work culture,
 our sense of shame, our collective conscience. (Lyngdoh 2003:145)

It is seen in the works of the writers from Northeast India that there is a continuous urge of going back to the native tradition in search of roots. These writers strongly advocate preservation of their own culture and tradition, which they seem to believe as a powerful way of asserting their own identity amidst cultural and political hegemony. In doing so, they also emphasize on preservation of ecology, as ecology of their region and their self-identity seem to be synonymous in their perception. The above lines from Lyngdoh's poem strongly exemplify this particular consciousness of the writers from Northeast India. This certainly opens up new avenues of studying this body of postcolonial ecological writing from Northeast India.

These writers are advocates of a drastic ethical change because, according to them, only this can check the large – scale destruction of nature. In order to develop an ethic for the conservation of environment, it is necessary to go back to the traditional values. The age-old values regarding environment preservation can restore the ecological equilibrium and only this restoration of ecology can revive the root and identity of the tribal people. This has been re-iterated in contemporary poetry in English from Northeast India.

Mona Zote (1972 —) and H. Ramdinthari (1976 —), the poets of Mizoram explore Mizoram's beautiful landscape with dense forests surrounded by green hills from all sides. The landscape of the land finds a nostalgic expression in the poetry of

both Zote and Ramdinthari. A strong mystical strain and religious spirit echoes in the following lines from Mona Zote's poem entitled "Lilyum":

Thin-skinned October
 With its cold religious air
 Eyes of coal
 Veins of ice
 And the dark – enfolded insects....
 O Allah she thinks of Jesu
 When out of the honeycomb of right
 Church drums busily advertise
 The high percentage of faith (Zote 2003-204)

An ecomystical tone also resounds in the poems of Ramdinthari profoundly:

For us the fogged lights of green leaves
 and the thick lamp-post of crushed boulders
 are antipodes where we build our huts; (Ramdinthari 2003:197)

Both the poets choose their images and metaphors from the ecology, tradition and culture of their native land. The world of nature has been explored in search of metaphors in order to express their inner selves.

Rajendra Bhandari (1954-) from Sikkim, who also writes in Nepali, his first language, speaks about the ecology of the land. Preoccupied with the landscape of Sikkim with its hills, rivers, forests and people, the ecology of the land is a source of inspiration for the poet:

I haven't materialized these lines
 I've lifted them from
 the forests, the lowlands,
 the grain fields, the cliffs. (Bhandari 2003:72)

A quest for roots is a significant feature in Bhandari's poetry like his fellow poets from other provinces:

....the bomber's lonely briefcase abandoned at some junction?
 Memory's tree, lush branches
 Aden with fruits
 Where are the roots? (ibidem 7)

Many contemporary poets in English from Tripura have been greatly contributed to the large body of writing in English from India's Northeast. Bhaskar Roy Barman (1950-), Niranjan Chakma (1951-), Kalyanbrata Chakraborti (1940-), Krittibas Chakraborty, Sefali Debbarma (1957-), Chandra Kanta Murasingh (1957-), Pijush Routh, Gombhini Sorokkhaibam (1971-) are the poets presently writing from Tripura. They vehemently talk about ecology, myth and legends of their land. The ecology of the land comes to life in the following lines from Krittibas Chakraborty's poem entitled "Tripura":

One day they left beyond the dawn towards the woods
 The green corn of *jhum* and
 Terrain flowers greeted them
 They started living in the silent hills
 Across the cucumber and *futi* fields. (Chakraborty 2003:24)

That nature is a living entity and every object of nature has a soul is an ecomystical concept. This is seen in this poetic expression:

A tree's also just the same-
 Will take birth, grow, spring leaves, spread branches will
 bear flowers, will hang fruits....
 But, it doesn't have the power to say anything.
 So I, where no love is bred in hearts,
 am a frustrated woman of a society's brutal stage. (Sorokkhaibam 2003: 262)

The famous Chakma poet Niranjan Chakma has a strong concern for the Chakma people, the indigenous community of the land, and the sons of the soil who have been the refugees now. They have been driven out by the illegal migrants from Bangladesh, a dominant issue of contemporary politics of the Northeast as a whole. These displaced people have an adverse effect on the environment as a whole as the problem of displacement also has an ecological aspect in it. Niranjan Chakma tries to portray the plight of these people who have either been driven out of their land or have become refugees in their homeland:

They are displaced
 From their homeland
 By the intruders,
 Their dew-wet
 Courtyard inundated
 With tears,
 Their survival's tide
 Has been seized by
 The midnight lamentation. (Chakma 2003:240)

Ecological concerns are strongly felt in the poets writing in English from India's Northeast. Native culture and tradition, myths and legends are consciously explored in order to assert self identity. The traditional values are seen as answer to the present ecological decadence and degeneration. The bulk of their poetry can also be analyzed from eco-spiritual, ecofeminist and ecomystic points of views. The body of this postcolonial poetry in the light of the tenets of ecomysticism, ecofeminism and ecocriticism presents quite an interesting, meaningful as well as an attractively enriching analysis.

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CHAPTER – V

Special Features in Tagore and Northeast Indian Poets

The works of Rabindranath Tagore and the representative poets of Northeast India can be categorized under the postcolonial and postcolonial literature because of their concerns of suffering under the colonial powers and their fond nostalgic memories of past cultures and traditions where the said poets have sought repose. Environmentalism, ecocentrism and anthropocentrism have been contested spaces of concern where the poetical works of Tagore and the poets of Northeast can be situated for discussion and analysis.

The chief concerns of postcolonialism are the experiences of exclusion, ‘othering’, hybridity, mimicry, woes of subalternity and resistance under colonial power centres. It can be addressed through the historical, political, cultural, and textual ramifications of the colonial encounter between the west and the non-West, dating from the sixteenth century to the present day (Boehmer 2006: 340). It critically scrutinizes the colonial relationship undercutting the myths of power, the race classifications, and the imagery of subordination in the colonial discourse. Postcolonial literature believes that one’s identity is rooted in one’s own tradition. Hence it explores traditional value system in quest for personal, racial or cultural identity. This exploration as well as the dismantling of the myths of power, subordination, race, or gender classifications add a strong dimension to postcolonial/postcolonial writing and it becomes a powerful tool for resistance as well as identity, self-assertion and self-definition. For this self-definition of the colonized people, and to obtain a space and a place for them, postcolonial literature seeks to reconstruct the past even by recreating history.

Postcolonial ecological writing is a resistance against the colonial aggression on nature and the rampant destruction of the natural world. Under the mask of development and progress, there has been terrible onslaught of the colonial agenda of exploring and exploiting nature and

devastating the natural superstructure. All the colonies, including India, have a long history of this experience.

‘Postcolonial’ is a theorizing of the ecological and postcolonial concerns to address the issues of ecocide derived from the current contexts of the marginalization of Nature, waste colonialism, environmental racism, discriminatory intellectual property rights, ecocidal globalizing scientific technology and the absence of Nature as a category in the theorizing of postcolonialism (Nayar 1999:71). The term ‘Postcolonial’ is a portmanteau word derived from the combination of the words ‘postcolonial’ and ‘ecological’.

Deep ecology is a significant constituent of postcolonial thought. As we depend on the Mother Earth for our various needs like (i) survival needs (food, shelter, health), (ii) security needs (protection from danger), (iii) belonging (social needs-love, friendship) (iv) self-esteem (ego needs-recognition, status) and (v) self-actualisation (creativity, fulfillment of potential) (ibidem 77), we must protect our eternal abode and honour her.

Rabindranath Tagore reflected the postcolonial and postecological aspects of writing in the sense that his poetry is basically reflection of the greatness of Indian Nature, the mystic ways of life and Nature, deep spirituality, love of motherland, indigenous religious saga and several other cultural and political realities of his homeland. He was a poet, prophet, propagator of human values, revolutionary of new ideas and radical thinker. He was passionate preacher of religion of love and hardwork. He was worshipper of Nature, freedom of thought and speech and motherland. In his poetry, he proved himself as a Deep ecologist, spiritual ecologist, eco-mystic, ecofeminist and hence he has been a strong source of inspiration for all ecological writers and mostly the writers of North East India. He is one amongst the fifty major environmental thinkers of the World.

The Northeast part of India being a biodiversity hotspot has been famous for its natural glory from time immemorial. Nature has a significant place in Indian traditional values. It has been worshipped and revered since time immemorial. Basic Indian ethos teaches to be

compassionate to nature and to be in complete harmony with it. It propagates the idea that human beings and nature share a bond of mutual understanding, respect and inter-dependence. It is interesting to note that traditional Hindu beliefs associate various birds and animals to different gods and goddesses, and thus attributing those birds and animals a position of respect and reverence. People have been worshipping nature mystifying its presence and entity. The malevolent aspect of nature has been a source of human woe and wonder since the dawn of human civilization.

Indian traditional belief reflects reverence for both the biotic and abiotic elements of the natural world suggesting ecoconsciousness in traditional values. The cultural ethos of various tribes of Northeast India is also reflective of the spirit of reverence for the world of nature. In the folk narratives of Tripura, Burasa, the god of woods and forest is worshipped; while the Sikkimese myths of Creation believe that the earth was created by Itbu-moo or It-moo, who they believe is the Great Mother Creator (Sen 2006: 12-17).

Each province of Northeast has multiple myths and mysteries relating to nature and there are many nature gods and goddesses whose greatness and roles in human life are depicted in the mythologies and various epics/ religious texts. Reverence for nature is reflected in people's worship of the natural objects like the Sun, trees, rocks, rivers, fire or various animals. People worshipped those forces and natural agencies from which they were benefited by getting energy and life force. It was reciprocity, a way of showing gratitude to the benevolent nature. This is the very concept of Deep Ecology and this has been practised with all sanctity and sincerity in Indian society since time immemorial.

The Indian scriptures written thousands of years ago speak of the preservation of nature, environment and the entire ecosystem. The Indian scriptures, which are said to be the repositories of Indian philosophy, speak of preservation of environment and thus to maintain the ecological balance. The Hindu scriptures, such as the Vedas, the Upanishadas and the Puranas are abundant with hymns glorifying and worshipping the environment. The ecological concern found in these scriptures written thousands of years ago testify the traditional Indian attitude towards environment.

This concern for environment and the ecological awareness in these ancient literatures are amazing that reflect the Indian consciousness towards environment conservation. In the Vedas, there are a number of beautiful hymns dealing with environment and the need to protect it with all its purity. This is a holistic view of the universe as well as the entire ecosystem that reflects the traditional Indian values, concept and awareness for the environment and the ecology. Then the British came and there started a new history in India. The colonial gaze of profit and prosperity has started exploiting nature. In the name of progress and development, nature was made to degenerate to the deepest extent. The age-old values regarding nature and its sanctity were shaken of which the colonized people had to be mute spectators. They were the 'other' compelled to live in the periphery and whose voice was obviously unheard.

The poets of Northeast India are comparable with Rabindranath Tagore in the following aspects:

- (i) Rabindranath Tagore had a good relation with the Northeast India and a part of the region was under the administration of his Zamindary for sometime and he frequently visited Tripura and the East Bengal was attached with North East at that time. Like Manipur myths and legends being incorporated in the works of Sri Aurobindo, the same were also incorporated in his works.
- (ii) The poets of Northeast of the post-colonial era have reflected the myths, realities, history and ecological glory of the region.
- (iii) As romantics, the poets of various ethnic communities have done justice to their ethos, ambitions, aspirations and pains of past and present.
- (iv) They have been the singers of sagas of their tribes exposing the the identities of their own and thereby establishing their glories.

- (v) They have been quite prophetic of their future and eulogizers of their past upholding their pristine saga.

People gradually started sensing the loss of nature as an aftermath of colonialism. They began to suffer due to the ecological imbalance. Population growth, environmental pollution and resource depletion have posed great threats to human civilization. To cope with the changing scenario in the environment, people started undertaking various projects like plantation, resource management, etc. This is what basically Shallow Ecology is all about. It is predominantly a postcolonial concept.

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CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

Rabindranath Tagore has been a poet and prophet of all the times and through his poetic monuments has united Nature, God and Soul. He has been a bard of realities, mysticism, mellifluous melodies and soulful lyricism and his works have glorified the virtues of the Almighty. His poetry depicts soul's eternal quest for a glorious fulfillment. His poetic voices all the time speak the eternal truth and reality what is most desired in human life as a whole. The feminine virtues of nature in its myriad ways have been explored as ecofeminist and ecomystic and the secret laws of life and nature have been very mellifluously depicted. In *Gitanjali* when the poet's persona says, "I am here to sing thee songs", that epitomizes very motto of human life. He has seen life as essentially devotional, meant for glorifying the Almighty who has made this world a huge arrangement for all our needs. Similarly all his poems divinely motivated sing the songs of God's and life's glories.

India's Northeast, comprising of eight different states having huge cultural, linguistic, ethnic, or religious differences among them is a mega biodiversity and prominent seat of literary and cultural diversity. Sharing with the international borders of Bangladesh, Bhutan, Myanmar, China and Nepal, it is linked to the rest of the country by a narrow corridor which is referred to as the Chicken's Neck. With the tradition and culture of different tribes and ethnic groups, it is a rich storehouse of different languages and dialects of its indigenous multi-ethnic people. There are tribes still following the traditional animistic faith along with multiple other religious faiths.

In spite of having all these diversities, these states have many things in common. They share common political, economic or social problems such as the

problem of insurgency, separatist movements or the issue of rampant corruption in the bureaucracy. Apart from this, all the states share almost the same natural landscape. They have hills, mountains, lush green forests with rare flora and fauna, rivers, valleys and multi-ethnic people with vibrant culture and tradition. With such bounties of nature, these eight states, as a whole, are blessed with a unique ecology. The significant commonality in the core issues and the common ecosystem bind these eight states in one single entity as the Northeast India- the multi-pronged resourceful, vibrant, colourful and rich Northeast.

All the 225 tribes of Northeast have rich oral and cultural traditions. The oral history of these tribes tells of ancestors from the shadowy past, from mountains steeped in mist and romance, from lands far away, of snake gods and princesses, epic battles and great warriors. Besides having rich oral literatures, some provinces like Assam, Manipur and Tripura have literary histories that date back to many centuries where royal dynasties established strong literary traditions. Writing in English from Northeast India is an emerging or new literature moulded of native elements and realities shaping the nascent soulscape of the budding writers. This corpus of writing is a recent phenomenon compared to the literatures in English from other parts of India.

While Indian provincial writing in English began in Bengal much before the Independence or the partition of India, the writing in English from Northeast started only about three decades ago. Writing in English from Northeast India, as a discourse of myriad realities of self-expression, mystical exuberance and ecological explorations started only in the 80s of the 20th century.

But in this relatively short span of time it seems to attain a legitimate and powerful voice by articulating their senses and sentiments and focusing on some of the core issues of the region. It is a distinctive voice in the realm of Indian Writing in

English. Although it has already achieved a remarkable stature, it seems to be deprived of the critical attention it really deserves in the national/ international scenario. This naturally limits the corpus of Indian Writing in English narrowing the varied world of this literature. The writer from the Northeast differs from his counterpart in the mainland in a significant way. While it may not make him a better writer, living with the menace of the gun he cannot merely indulge in verbal wizardry and wooly aesthetics but must perforce master the art of witness.

Apart from having different sensibilities, it's the political nature of these writings which make them different. The fraught relationship most of the North-eastern states have with the centre often gets reflected in the literature, be it in English, Assamese or Bodo. The fact that literary circles have been discussing 'literature from NE' as a different body of work, attests that it is in developing in opposition to Indian-English writing, which probably mirrors the fraught relationship NE has with Delhi. Tilottama Misra says about the nature of writing in English from Northeast India that an intense sense of awareness of the cultural loss and recovery that came with thenegotiation with 'other' cultures is a recurrent feature of the seven north-eastern states. Each small community or linguistic group has responded through its oral or written communication to the encounters with the majoritarian cultures from either mainland India or from outside the borders of the country, in its own distinctive manner. (Misra 2011: 3)

Since the eight states of the region hugely vary from each other in tradition, culture, language, and religion, it might seem to be an injustice to homogenize literatures from this region. But in spite of this diversity, it is possible to locate some common grounds, some shared values and concerns of these writers. Identity crisis and a sense of alienation are some of the dominant features of contemporary politics in the Northeast. Racial autonomy, cultural and linguistic conflicts and the problem of insurgency have been ravaging the region. These are some of the recurrent themes in these writers that bind them in one single thread. Besides issues like identity crisis,

search for roots, self-assertion, or claims for a political space, it is the ecology of the region, and an ecological concern that predominantly seem to unite these multi-ethnic writers in a common platform. The works of the writers in English from India's Northeast have many different aspects of the entire ecosystem of the region.

The writers celebrate the ecological glory of Northeast with a keen ecological awareness. Although ethnicity is their chief concern as they hail from various ethnic groups, mountains, hills, valleys, people, myths legends, tribal rites, mystic as well aesthetic sensibilities, communal violence, insurgency are also some of the dominant and recurring themes in their works. They seem to use ecology, in a conscious way, as a tool for acquiring an identity. It is felt that the unique ecology of the region has been pivotal in shaping an aesthetic sensibility of these writers. The present work has engaged itself in a multi-pronged study of contemporary writing in English from India's Northeast from an ecological standpoint in canonical perspectives.

Ecological concern is one of the dominant features of the writing in English from Northeast India. Even in the vernacular literatures nature occupies a significant place. The oral narratives, the myths and legends, the folktales, and the rites and rituals of different tribes of this region reflect the intangible heritage and the age-old bond they share with nature. The basic Indian ethos teaches to be compassionate to nature and to live in harmony with it. In Indian culture there has been a tradition of living with nature with mutual respect, understanding and dependence. The tribal communities of Northeast India too have been worshipping, nurturing and preserving nature since the long past. Writing from Northeast India celebrates this human-nature relationship exploring the tradition, culture and heritage of the multi-ethnic communities of this region.

In contemporary writings in English from India's Northeast India present before us a myriad, mesmerizing world of nature that also echoes a conscious voice of resistance as well as of assertion. It is a voice of resistance against the neo-colonial

powers and also a voice of assertion for a distinct identity. It attempts to create a 'space' and a 'place' for itself amidst political and cultural hegemony negotiating different issues simultaneously. Their writings, besides talking about contemporary socio-political problems, seriously raise ecological issues. There is glorification of nature, and also deep concerns for ecological degradation. Their works form a strong voice of protest against colonial/neo-colonial eco-degradation and exploitation of nature. Because they seem to believe that it is a threat not only to the environment alone, but also to the very identity of the indigenous tribes. It has been seen through this study that the ecology of the region has been consciously used by the contemporary writers in negotiating these issues. This consciousness makes this immensely rich corpus of writing from India's Northeast canonical. This canonical writing plays a pivotal role in understanding the region as a whole.

Contemporary Poetry in English from India's Northeast has multi – faceted voices. It is an expression of an individual poetic self, and at the same time, it is the saga of the people of the region in general. It presents a vista of images of the mountains, hills, rivers, myths and legends, tradition and culture, and multi – ethnic people of the region. The subject matters it deals with ranges from geography to politics, myths and legends to ecology. Ecological concern is a notable characteristic of poetry from this part of the country. Identity crisis or a sense of alienation is one of the dominant features of contemporary politics in the Northeast.

There has been a conscious use of ecology as a means for an assertion of identity in the works of the poets of this region. Ecology seems to play a pivotal role in their search for identity, root, traditional values and culture, which are lost in the din and bustle of modernization and urbanization as Northeast India is one of South Asia's last land frontiers and through much of the twentieth century these sparsely populated areas have attracted large-scale migration from the rest of the subcontinent. The protective discrimination regime arose partly as a response to these demographic trends. Many of these tribal societies have been going through a process of transition

from shifting cultivation to settled agriculture, from clan control of land to commodification of land, urbanization, and cultural change associated with the process of modernization.

That ecology plays a vital role to provide a common ground to these poets, or to bound them together can be seen in the overwhelming presence of nature in the works of almost all of these poets, sometimes imaginatively, sometimes romantically, but most of the time consciously. Their works also reflect their serious concerns of various ecological issues such as large-scale deforestation, coal and uranium mining, ethnic violence, insurgency and counter-insurgency operations — all that ultimately lead to the degradation of ecology. Their poetry strongly advocates preservation of ecology of the region as, they believe, it would be the way of preserving their land, their native tradition and culture, and above all, their identity.

These writers are writing with a strong ecological sensibility and consciousness to present the greatness of their culture and habitat as their identity. Their works present before us a myriad, mesmerizing world of nature, and, at the same time, echo a conscious voice of resistance as well as assertion. Contemporary writing in English from India's Northeast negotiates varied issues simultaneously. It is quite interesting to note that the ecology of the region is one of their strongest weapons for all such negotiations. The writings in English from this region, having serious ecological concerns, can be seen as essentially a postcolonial and postcolonial discourse. It presents a critique of the colonial perspective of, and the colonial attitude towards, the environment. It is seen that contemporary writing in English from India's Northeast is also a literature of resistance against what can be termed as neo-colonialism. Because of this consciousness of the ecological degradation and sincere efforts of propagating ecological preservation in writing, this body of ecological writing can very well be said canonical.

It is seen from this study of both the creative and critical works of the contemporary the poets from Northeast India and Rabindranath Tagore that writing in English from this region has a world of possibilities. From this study of this writing it seems that it has all the power to go on in its creative journey with all vigour and vitality. It has greatly contributed to the corpus of Indian writing in English. It is hoped that it will be more enriched both with quality and quantity and will go on infusing newer ideas, themes, technique and style. This study shows that this immensely rich body of writing has the potential of creating a tradition of its own. Contemporary writing in English from India's Northeast will always be relevant and will remain of great significance in re/inventing the Northeast India as well as India as a whole.

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Signature of the Supervisor

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