

Reimagining Home: A Reading of Oikopoetics in Sara Joseph's *Gift in Green*

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Abstract

Sara Joseph, a prominent writer and social activist from Kerala, has made noteworthy contributions to the literary field and activism through her novel Gift in Green. The novel acts as a compelling source that advocates green consciousness which offers justice and resists the environmental imbalances that exist in the society. This paper explores the disruption that severs this vital connection, particularly through the destruction of lands. Deep-rooted in the philosophies of 'oikopoetics' the novel examines the symbiotic relationship between humans and nature which highlights the interconnectedness of human existence with the natural world. By applying oikopoetic theory, the study aims to elucidate the behavioural patterns of society and examine how the dominance of anthropocentric views and ego consciousness perpetuates urbanization and commercialization, leading to the contamination and exploitation of the earth.

Keywords: Anthropocentric, Environmental Imbalance, Land, Humans and Nature, Oikopoetics.

Introduction

"Ecocriticism speaks for the voiceless earth. This approach is earth-centred and all the other approaches are ego-centred" (Frederick 21). Ecocriticism is an interdisciplinary field that studies literature and the environment. Critics analyze various aspects of the work of art to uncover the elements, factors and perspectives related to the environment. Sarah Joseph is a highly renowned writer and activist known for her contributions to Malayalam literature. She has authored numerous novels and collections of short stories. Her novel *Aalahayude Penmakkal* (Daughters of God the Father) earned her prestigious accolades such as the Sahitya Akademi Award and the Vayalar Award. A prominent figure in the feminist movement in Kerala, Sarah is also the founder of Manushi, an organization dedicated to empowering women. The novel *Gift in Green*, translated by Rev. Dr. Valson Thampu, an esteemed educationalist and religious reformer, was simultaneously published in English and Malayalam. This novel presents unique insights into the relationship between

people and their land, particularly focusing on the significance of their connection with water bodies, mangrove forests, birds and butterflies. The earth and the sky were serene. “In Aathi, the air was light, the water pristine, and the wind pure” (61). The people who live in the village closely lived with the nature. “Basically indigenous people have a close relationship with the nature. One cannot isolate them from the nature” (Gnanaraj 60). Through the narrative, the novelist sheds light on the detrimental impact of commercialization and urbanization on the natural environment, symbolized by the expulsion of sewage as a consequence of modernity.

Ecocriticism takes an earth-centred approach to literary studies. It is fundamentally a moral criticism and pedagogy which explores and aids in making the possible connections between the individual and the environment. Ecocritical approaches can be theoretical, chronological, didactic, critical, psychological, and rhetorical. It encourages all views into its tent to understand the human relationship with nature, the philosophies and understandings of different ethnic groups. In the novel *Gift in Green*, the novelist focuses on the environmental issues where the environment gradually gets ruined because of modernization.

Exploring ecological themes in literature through oikopoetics enhances our understanding of environmental issues and prompts us to consider the ethical implications of our interactions with nature. Oikopoetics is deeply embedded in ecocriticism which offers a valuable theoretical framework for understanding the environmental aspects of literature. It explores the intricate bond between humans and their natural surroundings as portrayed in literary works. This interdisciplinary approach draws from diverse fields such as literature, ecology, philosophy, and sociology to analyse how literary texts engage with ecological themes. Scholars like Lawrence Buell, Thoreau Rachel Carson and Morton have emphasized how literature profoundly influences our understanding of environmental subjects and raises a deeper obligation by examining representation of landscapes, ecosystems, and human-nature interactions. In *Gift in Green*, Joseph presents a compelling example of eco-literature within the framework of oikopoetics. Joseph demonstrates the symbiotic relationship between humans and nature, prompting readers to reflect on their connections to the natural world and the complexities of the human-nature relationship.

By emphasizing the interconnecting of all living beings, oikopoetics stresses the significance of cultivating feasible connections with the environment and advancing dependable stewardship of the Earth. Through the consideration of eco-literature and oikopoetics, both researchers and perusers are empowered to lock in important dialogues around how writing can motivate natural activism and contribute to the conservation of our planet for future generations. This paper utilizes a subjective approach to analyze Sara Joseph’s novel “*Blessing in Green*” through the focal point of oikopoetics. Drawing upon scholarly hypothesis, ecocriticism, and socio-cultural investigation, the think-about looks at the subjects of nature, human-nature interaction, and environmental debasement presented within the novel. The essential technique includes near perusing and literary examination of “*Gift in Green*,” centring on key entries that light up the relationship between people and nature. By scrutinizing the dialect, symbolism, and account structure utilized by Joseph, the paper looks to reveal fundamental messages and philosophical bits of knowledge concerning natural stewardship and maintainable living.

Moreover, they consider coordinating bits of knowledge from eco-critical hypothesis, especially the concept of oikopoetics, which investigates the depiction of nature inside scholarly talk. This hypothetical system makes a difference in contextualizing Joseph’s depiction of ecological topics inside broader scholarly and social settings, shedding light on the importance of nature in human encounters. Besides, the paper draws upon auxiliary sources, counting insightful articles, basic papers, and hypothetical writings on eco-criticism and oikopoetics. These sources give hypothetical establishing and basic viewpoints that improve the examination of *Gift in Green* and

its environmental subjects. Through an all-encompassing and intriguing approach, this thinks about aims to deepen understanding of Sara Joseph's literary contributions to ecological discourse and explore the implications of her work for contemporary environmental thought and activism.

The theory of Ecocriticism was in existence in Tamil literature also. It was termed by Tamil writers as 'tinai', which could be known as eco-criticism in earlier days. This concept of 'tinai' has a closeness with the Greek term 'okios' which means 'household'. As 'okiocriticism' or 'oikopoetics' is called as the kind of ecocriticism. Thus, 'oikos' is synonymous with the modern-day theory of eco-criticism. Eco criticism is the result of the new consciousness: that very soon, there will be nothing beautiful (or safe) in nature to discourse about unless we are very careful. By the 1990s it had become a recognized and rapidly growing field of literary study with its organisation (ASLE: Association for the Study of Literature and Environment), and soon a journal, Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and the Environment (ISLE) was launched in 1993. Tinai combines the natural and cultural features of specific landscapes found in Tamil Nadu. The landscapes are divided into five—namely, the Mountain (Kurinci), the Pastoral (Mullai), the Desertic (Paalai), the Riverine (Marutam), and the Littoral (Neytal). The landscapes are named after native flowers which are the keystone species in the specific landscapes (Selvamony 215-16).

The novel mainly deals with the Mullai (Pastoral) and Marutham (River). It shows the importance of the land. "For us, the land means a great deal more than this calculation of profit or loss. The land is the warmth of our hearts! We know the land with our hearts, not with our heads. It is not to cheat the land we have known in the marrow of our bones" (205). The lines clearly state the attachment of human nature to nature. In one stage people of the Aathi village and nature embodied each other.

The army marched, ploughing the river bed and crushing the empire of oysters. As the baby oysters, began to rise and float on the water, the women began to beat their breasts and wail. 'What are you doing, you buffaloes? It is our food you're ruining.' While collecting oysters, they used to pickout the little ones gingerly and let them out of their nets. (40)

The description of the imagination documents the reality of the place. Eco-consciousness is deliberately seen in the phrase. In the quoted lines 'Heads' states the ego consciousness of the human mind. According to Jung, the ego represents the conscious mind as it comprises the thoughts, memories, and emotions a person is aware of. The ego is largely responsible for feelings of identity and continuity. The novelist differentiates the concise of the human mind descriptively. "Occasionally when the water level receded a little . . . plastic carry bags lay scattered like bloated foetuses. Over them, flies and mosquitoes droned with vengeance. Too restless to sit still even for a minute" (207) the river is the central plot of the novel. Here the daily expulsions of tonnes of sewage create suffering among people. Novelist discusses the usage of plastic bags the problems as an instigate problem.

As Heidegger says, "Man is not the lord of the universe. Man is the shepherd of Being" (221), anthropocentrism relates human beings as the centre for everything. It symbolizes man is not dependable; other living organisms are dependent on humankind. The environment is treated in an anthropocentric view. This reason makes humans self-dependent. But practically speaking both humans and the environment depend on each other. The problem lies with humankind, without accepting that nature plays a predominant role, we are incapable of using it. Harming nature is very easy, but nature won't harm us in any way. Urbanization and commercialization were found to the threats to the ecosystem. Due to the advancement of urbanization, many economists and historians stated that it would end in an environmental crisis. The same happened in the village due to the advancement of roads and bridges choking the water life, and birds and butterflies fleeing the dying. Total peace of state is dismantling, and nature has been used as a slave to human life. The analysis reveals that Gift in Green serves as a poignant critique of anthropocentrism and

ego consciousness, which lie at the heart of society's disconnect from nature. Through distinctive imagery and reminiscent composition, Joseph highlights the obliterating effect of urbanization and commercialization on the environment, especially the destruction of lands. The novel underscores the pressing requirement for a world view move in human demeanours towards nature, emphasizing the interconnecting and interdependency of all living beings. "If humans live in communion with nature, they may lead a happy life, by maintaining Ecological balance" (Premkumar 64). Through the focal point of oikopoetics and ecocriticism, the consideration highlights the novel's investigation of humanity's relationship with nature, the effect of urbanization and commercialization on the environment, and the pressing requirement for biological stewardship. By analyzing key entries and utilizing hypothetical systems, the paper explains the significant philosophical bits of knowledge and socio-cultural studies inserted inside Joseph's story.

The novel's depiction of the devastation of common living spaces and the abuse of the environment underscores the squeezing natural challenges confronted by modern society. Besides, the consideration contributes to the developing body of writing on eco-criticism and oikopoetics, illustrating the significance of scholarly investigation in understanding and tending to natural issues. Through intrigue engagement and basic requests, this paper welcomes perusers to reimagine their relationship with nature and consider elective standards of environmental living.

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