

**From Technical Spirituality to Eco- Spirituality: Exploring the Holistic  
Realisation in Gopinath Mohanty's *High Tide, Ebb Tide* and Sara Joseph's**

*Gift in Green*

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**Abstract:**

The postmodern era of globalization has diverted the concerns of man from nature in the name of modernization which has led to problems like deforestation, flood, famine, droughts and humiliation of animals. Hence, it is a necessary to protect nature from deterioration. Eco- spirituality, one of the recent branches in Eco-criticism aims to flourish spirit of justice and solidarity through the acts of various earthly functions that may transform our nature and enhance the surroundings with holistic touch of natural beauty. It defines our relationship with God and explores the God within- not apart from- this totality and to visualise the totality as a vibrant, interdependent process centering on God and growing perfection in love. The central concern of this paper is to show how Eco- spirituality tries to relocate the earthly harmony that evidently pampers and nourishes human family without any assault or exploitation. In the backdrop of such ideas this paper intends to examine Gopinath Mohanty's *High Tide, Ebb Tide* and Sara Joseph's *Gift in Green* to focus on the ecological injustice that is done to nature and suggest that in order to restore the balance of universe, human community must change their attitude and outlook on nature.

**Keywords:** Eco-spirituality, Nature, Self- realisation, Spiritualism, Ecology.

**Eco-spirituality: A New Path**

As the Indian philosophy upholds, earth is the mother of all living and non- living beings. Hence, all are part of the earth as her constituent. It is impossible to think of existence of life without nature. The relationship between nature and man is

unconsciously interconnected with one another in the form of ecosystem. The postmodern era of globalization has diverted the concerns of man from nature in the name of modernisation which has led to problems like deforestation, flood, famine, droughts and humiliation of animals. Hence, it is a necessary to protect nature from deterioration. In order to reverse this situation and for stopping the over exploitation of nature, literature addresses the flaws in the approach and recommends Eco-spirituality. In considering the present scenario that keeps nature in 'threat zone', it is of vital importance to study nature not only in scientific ways but also through spiritual and ethical perspectives. This is also one of the major concerns in Deep ecology and the Gaia hypothesis.

Eco-spirituality is defined mainly by the way it reconnects and heals everything- all of life with all its polarities- in the minds and thoughts of all human beings. Thus, spirituality has the ability not only to unveil the graveness of modernity but also to usher in the new global paradigm and even the noosphere. This spirituality is a re-connective force that advocates transformation of mental ecology to the global consciousness and the formation of ecologico- social democracy. The re- examination of religion that focuses on the religious and philosophical understanding of man's embeddedness in nature has led to occupy a new knowledge system that are being sought to address the present environmental crisis. Historian Lynn White observed, "more science and technology are not going to get us out of the present ecology crisis until we find a new religion or rethink our old one"(White,1204). Eco-spirituality can provide a strong solid ideological and theological base for the current environment movement because it is rooted in deep motivation and commitments. It has the power to change fundamentally and challenge radically, the destructive culture that exploits nature and transform it into a life enhancing and eco- centric culture. One consolation is that the literature of our time continues to reflect our daily lives, offering both a focus on how we live today and an often painful critique of the foibles of contemporary life. At its best, it identifies the roots of our existential angst while celebrating the ingrained capacity of human spirit to find redemption, even in the midst of defeat. Two writers, in particular, Gopinath Mohanty and Sara Joseph, both Indian seems to envisage well this fact of our enslavement to modernity, of the

extent to which the human beings have been forced into the cramped confines it now inhabits, and of resourcefulness enabling humanity to find a self-corrective way.

### **Exploring the Divine Self in Gopinath Mohanty's *High Tide, Ebb Tide***

In Eco-spiritual sense man is 'inextricably related to all other life forms' in an intricately interconnected and interrelated web of life. It also considers man as a consciousness, a living energy having self- awareness and creativity, is not limited within the territory of the body. Such a human consciousness would develop through an order expressing itself in self- realisation. In other words, self-realisation is a form of awareness or process of comprehending in which the individual self tries to recognise the supreme qualities and values in other beings as it pervade in it. As Hettinger says " the earth is our creator: it brought us and all other life forms into existence. The earth's life process evolution, speciation, natural selection- are causally responsible for who we are "(Ecospirituality 93). According to Arne Naess the infinite task of 'self-realisation' is possible when human beings transcends the confined boundaries of their ego-self and becomes a part of cosmic celebration of life in nature. During this process of realisation, the anthropocentric attitude of domination of human beings as superior force on nature gets gradually diminished, and develops an ecoharmonic aura between man and nature. In the light of such conception the eminent post-colonial Odia novelist Gopinath's Mohanty's *High Tide, Ebb Tide* is analysed to substantiate the argument.

The novel displays an account of a pilgrimage to Puri, the holy land of Lord Jagannath (Lord of the Universe), by a middle class family from Kolkata. The novel presents the psychological journey of Tarun Roy, the protagonist and shows how he identifies his self with the infinite and greater self of nature. So the central idea of Eco-spiritualism in the novel tries to study the essential values of human life and promote the idea that the augmentation of such values is possible only through better understanding of greater realities of nature and biotic community. In the novel Tarun Roy's goal is to attain the spiritual and mystical essence in life from the aesthetic values of beautiful surroundings of Puri. It is the place being " ensouled by divinity"( Kar 31), epitomises the heart of nature. "It is the sacred and mysterious

place, considered as the abode of all Hindu Gods and the meeting point of heaven and earth"(Patnaik 56-57).This Holy spot has attracted sages, devotees, pilgrims, saints and others all through the history. They completely got mesmerized in this sacred land, in the process of searching for the timeless beauty, eternal bliss and profound mystery of the land. Such is the relevance of Puri, on the heart of which stands an age-old temple of Lord of the Universe. This sanctum-sanctorum, as a cultural artifact epitomizes the unique art and beauty that is in tune with nature exist with time, through time and beyond time.

The humble Tarun Roy, hailing from Kolkata enthralled by the historical glory of the place, has come with his wife and daughter to enjoy the sacred beauty and peace of the city- Puri by taking a short break from his tensed cosmopolitan life. In this sense, Puri can be considered as 'the Jerusalem of Hinduism'. And the pilgrimage to Puri by Roy and others can be regarded as an essential journey from "the city of discord and destruction to the celestial city"(Mohanty vii), what we see in John Bunyan's magnum opus, *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Unlike the other mystics who visit the sacred land to realise the heavenly bliss and salvation, Roy's retreat to Puri with his family is to get refreshment. This has a materialistic aim to regain strength and confidence to work for existence. It also shows that he is not in a state to renounce his responsibility of his worldly life rather he tries to explore the spiritual essence of the life, that can be assembled from the living cosmos. Coming in contact with the elements of nature- sea, air, sky etc Roy and his family has undergone a complete metamorphosis. He gets an opportunity to discover the ontological and epistemological basis of his life in relation to the absolute- Lord Jagannath. The Lord oversees the universe not by pronouncing orders but by pervading in all beings. With a sense of unity with all beings, one can understand the true law of nature that the world is not governed with power structure, rather designed and organised through intricate correlation. In this state Roy identifies the transcendence of his self from the ego- self and "a harmony between his inner self and the world outside"(Mohanty 4).

In a Wordsworthian way Tarun Roy describes the charm and mystery of the sky, the land, sea etc and the writer has put his best through the emotive language to express the exotic feelings and thoughts of Roy. He has lost his ego self , not only he but also his wife and daughter got overwhelmed with the joy of nature. To them the sun, the tree, the birds, the sky, the sand are majestic and have attained sublimity that inspires awe in the observers. In the course of narration Mohanty has tried to show the spiritual connection of modern man in the midst of existential sufferings. The faith that inspires to live a life with respect and that justifies a life with dignity for the entire living world is the soul of Eco-spiritualism. As Hettinger says," our spiritual attitudes towards the earth, its teeming life forms and human presence, has had and will have powerful effects on the human-nature relation"(Ecospirituality, 83).

It is a reality that Tarun Roy is incapable of keeping his mind firm in the spiritual plane. Tarun Roy with his fifty years of old memory and worn-out spirit can't get the purpose of his journey fulfilled by getting the uninterrupted blissful joy. The natural agents bring the past to present in Roy's consciousness. They bring in his mind "the glimpse of his past and undistinguished history of meaningless unwilling existence" (40). But as soon as he comes nearer to the sea with his confused and disturbed thoughts, he got his mind opened to the 'new life' where only the celebration of joy and excitement prevails. "The sea had spread out its feast of joys for so many to harvest"(Mohanty, 23). And Roy perceives-

The sea was forcing its will on him, it would not let him think of his own affairs, his problems, would not allow him to feel dejected, to accept old age...(22)

Here Roy undergoes a drastic change from his own existential plane to a higher plane. Similarly Roy's wife Kantomoyee, enjoying the sunset in Puri feels that she too is a part and parcel of this heavenly phenomenon. To her it is a rare experience where" everything appeared newborn, tender; mingled together, inseparable"(30).

**Holistic View of Nature in Sara Joseph's *Aathi or Gift in Green***

Sara Joseph , a prominent writer in Malayalam has written the novel *Aathi or Gift in Green*. It is an unconventional novel with water as its main theme. In her own words she says about the novel “*Gift in Green* is about water, and by extension, about Nature. At one level, the novel deals with the socio political aspects of human rights about water, at another, it is an attempt to explore man’s spiritual connection with water” (Interview given to The Hindu). The novel is a result of her investigations into the philosophical, historical, conceptual and organic importance of water in the Universe. All religion considers water as fundamental part of life and is treated as sacred. The novel treats nature and its inhabitants, including humans with an inviolable sense of equality. Through her novel Sara Joseph tries to create an environmentally sustainable, spiritually fulfilling and socially just human presence on this planet. Her passion aims at providing an eco- spiritual light and life to a world inching towards dystopian morals.

Eco- spirituality awakens our true nature and purpose and thus helps our inner self to overcome the outer or material brute power of those who seek to exploit and destroy nature. This spirituality unleashes our inner power and leads to real transformation. As Sara Joseph says in *Gift in Green*,

Water is not merely a means of washing away the dirt. Since the inscrutable mysteries of life are encoded in it, we must deem water equal to God. It is in water that people are baptized into spiritual vitality. Universally, water is revered as the eradicator of sin. None except the man who can grow a fish on dry land can claim the right to ruin water. (257)

This spirituality embraces an ethic of peace, non-violence and sustainability. Here the novelist refers to harmonious sustainability that includes respect for life in all its forms and judicious use of natural resources, with respect for the natural order and cycles of the environment. “In the past, the water here had a sort of radiant clarity. Now it was continually muddy. This clouded and burdened every mind in Aathi with sorrow and anxiety” (134).The real cause for all environmental problems lies deep in the human heart: the pathology of hate, anger, greed, selfishness, arrogance etc.Eco-spirituality teaches us the fact that healing of earth is possible only if we heal

and transform our hearts. Our transformation process may be slow and time consuming but a good beginning can be made on the level of consciousness. "Because we pollute the earth not with our hands alone but also with our hearts, nothing less than the cosmic flood would suffice: a flood mighty enough to sweep away the garbage of covetousness, corruption, treachery and oppression from deep within" (229).

Another key idea of Eco- spirituality is deep- ecology, which argues that the natural world is a balance of complex inter-relationships in which the organism depends on one another for their harmonious coexistence. According to Vandana Shiva, only deep ecological solutions can ensure that every person in this planet has enough food, water, shelter and dignity in life. If we don't follow the rules of nature then, that paradigm also ensure that most human beings will be denied their right to existence.

In narrating the story of Hagar, Joseph brings in the element of water that is the fountain of life of Aathi. "Hagar could understand the thirst of people, the infinite value of water and the secret of life scripted into it... But you must know that water is life itself" (14). The novelist through her writing tries to develop a value- based economic structure that is not concerned solely with our materialistic well being but wholeheartedly accepts human body and spirit as well as the rich biodiversity of the earth. Spirituality can profit from a new awareness of the bewitching quality of the cosmos. "...the people of Aathi would not do anything, for any reason, that would compromise the purity of the water. In the rare event of anyone doing anything to the contrary, wittingly or unwittingly, they would be made to confess it before Thampuram and to make amends for it...Water was Aathi's life..."(227-8). Only an eco- spiritual approach can bring a drastic change in this attitude. Sara Joseph through this novel highlights the shift in consciousness that is vital for humanity to navigate through its current economic, social and environmental challenges. The novel creates awareness that the first step towards harmonious living is not political but spiritual.

## Conclusion

From the detailed analysis of the two novels: *High Tide, Ebb Tide* and *Gift in Green*, we possibly get a deep understanding that everything in this universe has a holistic connection. Ecology may at first seem alien to theology or spirituality. When we make a keen analysis of the ecological crisis we find the underlying spiritual problems. Ecology and spirituality can be connected for healing our injured planet. Eco- spirituality unites the disintegrated and fragmented individuals by rising a consciousness of profound love of the earth, a feeling of oneness with nature and a realization that one's wellbeing is strongly inter- connected with the well-being of the Universe. To conclude, *High Tide, Ebb Tide* is a more spiritual and philosophical writing than a mere social drama by Gopinath Mohanty. In the novel, the self-realization transcends the limit of religious connotation and it recognise 'self 'as an extension of the unity of nature. On the other side Sara Joseph's *Gift in Green* explores the pain and sorrow that eventuate from the disruption of the intimate relationship between people and their macrocosm. Perceived as Creation, nature invites us to turn the Creator and take up the responsibility to embrace and protect the nature as Eden of God. As Lynn White observes "Since the roots of our trouble are so largely religious, the remedy must also be essentially religious ...We must rethink and refeel our nature and destiny" (White, 1207).



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