



ECOCRITICISM AND WORLD LITERATURE

AN OVERVIEW



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Shakespeare's *Macbeth*: An Ecological Dystopia

Dr. Prasenjit Panda

Ecocriticism aims to explore the relationship between man and nature and how they are connected with each other. It also shows how man by forgetting the essential relationship with nature, exploits environment and its resources to satisfy his endless greed. Along with the scientific progress and development, the value of nature has been totally ignored or forgotten by the mankind. Ecocriticism is the discourse which investigates the "interconnectivity" between man and nature in literary works, along with the analysis of "conceptualisations of nature, [...] the function of its constructions and metaphorisations in literary and other cultural practices" (Gersdorf & Mayer 10). Climate change, global warming, greenhouse effect, etc are part of the discourse in the 21st century. Even though the issues of environmental crisis have been highlighted by the ecocritics in the contemporary age, but one should not forget Shakespeare for his attitude towards nature and also his treatment of nature. Shakespeare uses nature as several ways in his sonnets and plays. Sometimes his nature is soothing like Forest of Arden in *As You Like It*, sometimes his nature is rough in *King Lear* and in *The Tempest*, sometimes his nature becomes unnatural in *Macbeth*, sometimes he deals with the perspectives of ecophobia where nature is seen as a hostile opponent which man has been trying to control and to put into use. As Simon Curtis Estok opines in his article "An Introduction to Shakespeare and Ecocriticism: The Special Cluster":

Doing ecocritical Shakespeares represents a tall order, and it probably explains why ecocriticism hasn't been applied to Shakespeare yet, with a few exceptions. When applied to Shakespeare, "ecocriticism", unlike image-cluster-counting, is hard work, and Shakespeareans want to know what "ecocritical" Shakespeares might look like, in contrast to what thematic readings of Nature in Shakespeare look like (110).

My present paper endeavors to illustrate the dynamics of nature in *Macbeth* where nature is not seen as mere an environmental phenomenon rather is seen as an active agent which has been continuously controlling and resisting the action of *Macbeth*.