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## DILIP CHITRE'S "THE FELLING OF THE BANYAN TREE": A CAUTION FOR ECO-CONCERN.

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**Abstract:**-Dilip Purshottam Chitre is a modern Indian English poet of great repute, who has penned various poems and has won several literary awards. The poet, in him, came out in early when he was a lad of mere fourteen. "Travelling In Cage" a collection of his poems, is his best known works in English. His poem " The Felling of the Banyan Tree" shows his excessive interest in ecology and his feeling for nature. Eco-criticism, perhaps, originates with William Rucckert's essay " Literature And Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism" in 1978. But it has to wait for popularity. It is Cheryl Glotfelty, in 1989, who made it popular and brought out extensive and penetrating works on the subject. Dilip chitre is essentially a product of modern age. Natural it must be that he has witnessed aforestation, technological development, urbanization, progress in science and its effects on both-Nature and human beings.

**Keywords:**Chitre, Eco-criticism , Technology, industrialism, urbanization, Eco-critics, Environment, ecology , environmental crisis

### INTRODUCTION:

Dilip Purshottam Chitre is a modern Indian English poet of great repute, who has penned various poems and has won several literary awards. The poet, in him, came out in early when he was a lad of mere fourteen. " Travelling In Cage" a collection of his poems, is his best known works in English. His poem " The Felling of the Banyan Tree" shows his excessive interest in ecology and his feeling for nature. In this paper, I would like to point out the close relation between Ecology and literature. Instead of plunging directly on the poem with eco-critical point of view, let me explain eco-criticism and its main concerns. The first part of my essay consists of introduction to eco-criticism, the second part deals with the poem from eco-critical point of view and The last part shows a brief comparison between Dilip Chitre's " The Felling Of The Banyan Tree ", Emily Dickinson's " A Bird Came Down The walk " and Robert Frost' s" Nothing gold can stay" with eco-point of view.

### I ECO-CRITICISM AND LITERATURE

Eco-criticism, perhaps, originates with William Rucckert's essay " Literature And Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism" in 1978. But it has to wait for popularity. It is Cheryl Glotfelty, in 1989, who made it popular and brought out extensive and penetrating works on the subject. It was not until the beginning of the 1990s that ecocriticism became a recognised movement. The Accociation for the Study of Literature and Enivironment (ASLE), a major organization for eco-critics world wide, was founded in 1992 which gives a proper direction to the efforts of eco critics. Eco-criticism is also called as "green criticism". It analyses the role that the natural environment plays in the imagination of a cultured community at a specific moment. It examines what priorities are assigned or denied to nature. It examines how nature is portrayed in the work of art and also examines the relationship between humans and Nature. In short, it investigates how nature is literally and metaphorically used in the work of art.

Eco-criticism links science and literary criticism. It examines various ecological issues that are referred to in literary works. Technology, industrialism, urbanization, excessive chemical plants, increase in population degrade ecosystem to such a great extent that many social and ecological institutions have come up to fight for the rights of environment. The ecological institutions and serials like "Bhoomi", 'Khel Khel Main Badlo Dunia', try their best for creating eco-concern among the masses.

Though Eco-criticism or green criticism may be relatively a recent branch of study, yet in literature and art, the study of nature and of human's relationships with Nature is not. Many Marxists have studied nature as a set of conditions to be overcome by technological progress and some psycho-analytical critics have studied nature as an object of unstated desires,

political sentiments and social taboos. But the eco-critics study Nature for the sake of nature and try to find out the ways for the removing of the cultural blockage that hinder effective action against environmental crisis. Eco-criticism looks back on a long tradition of criticism that approach nature as an aesthetic object and not a subject scientific study. For an eco-critic, the text becomes a place where different aspects of nature become various phenomena to be scientifically dissected and analyzed. A text is mere construct in which science is called upon merely to assess the inherent beauty as well as utility of Nature. Eco-criticism also has enriched the dictionary of criticism by introducing various ecological terms. Eco-criticism contributes not only to the dialogue between literature and Science, but also to the awareness of a closer relationship between humans and Nature.

Just as Feminism examines language and literature from a gender-conscious perspective, so eco-criticism takes an earth-centered approach to literary work. Eco-critics study how is nature represented in art? How is the land/nature described in literature? Texts are evaluated in terms of their environmentally harmful or helpful effects. They analyzed Nature in an attempt to understand the cultural developments that have led to present global ecological crisis. Searching for the alternative to the most destructive forms of industrial development, Eco-critics have looked to native non industrial cultures and try to explore a closed affiliation between these culture and environment.

In general, any literary theory examines the relation between writer, text, and the world, but eco-criticism expands the notion of the world to include entire eco-sphere into it.

## II

### Eco-criticism and "The felling of the Banyan Tree"

After explaining the head-theme of eco-criticism, now, I would like to illustrate the poem "The felling of the Banyan Tree" in the light of eco-criticism. It is a small poem of three Stanzas in all 25 lines.

The narrator's house is situated on a hill. His father tells his tenants to vacate their houses. The narrator's house is surrounded by them. All the vacated houses were destroyed one by one and there remained the only house of the narrator and many trees. There was a huge Banyan tree of 200 years old having long association with the house. But the father decided to cut all trees. The process of destruction, it is interesting to note here, is in the middle of the natural phenomenon. Secondly, Dilip Chitre used the word "house" instead of "home" the connotation of which is known to all. Thirdly, the attitude of "Old" generation evident by grandmother's statement, is remarkable. The grandmother has always invoked love of Nature. She used to say that trees are sacred and to chop them off is the greatest crime. But the narrator's father has massacred them all. All types of trees - the sheoga, oudumber, neem- were cut down. But the huge banyan tree stood like a problem whose roots were deeper than his father's attachment to the land. Finally his father ordered to remove or cut down the tree.

It is interesting to note that the grandmother represents the feminine world which, here, fights against the onslaught of technology on nature. She is so pure that she could not think to live without Nature. So she proclaims that "to kill a tree is a crime". For her, trees are sacred and she worships Nature. On the other hand, the narrator's father represents the masculine world which has exploited the nature and ruled over the entire world. He "ordered" to cut down the tree which is elder to him. He chopped all trees perhaps for his monetary gain. He is so heartless that he does not listen to the advise of his "mother" for "mother - earth". While his mother worships nature, he demolishes nature for some coins.

The second stanza describes the Banyan tree and its cutting. The tree was three times taller than the house of the narrator. Its trunk had a radius of fifty feet. The uneven hanging roots reached the ground. The fifty men with axes, first, cut the roots. The branches fell down from thirty feet. It took seven days to cut the branches and its heap was huge. The poet describes the process of forestation. The tree was more than 30 feet huge and its trunk had a circumference of fifty feet. Such a big tree is difficult to cut. But the attack of men on Nature converted a huge tree into "the heap which was huge" It takes seven days for them to cut.

The third stanza shows the effect of cutting on an innocent world. The Banyan tree is an ecological niche for the insects & birds. Many insects & different types of bird live on it. They must have food chain for their livelihood. But the cutting of the banyan tree eradicates their shelter, food and even the lives of some of them. So they began to leave the tree in despair & disappointment. Near about fifty men with their axes come to its massive trunk and chopped it continuously. The circular lines on the chopped trunk of the tree indicate its age. The Banyan tree was about 200 years old. It is interesting to note that the narrator and his friends and relatives watched the slaughter in terror and fascination with a mixed feeling. Soon they shifted to Bombay, a land of technology, where there are no trees and no natural beauty. But still the memory of a forestation in his mind is so deep-rooted that it haunts in his dream. His mind is still filled with the horror of the felling of the Banyan tree and its aerial roots. "looking for ground" to reach.

While the first stanza describes the relationship between Nature-- Feminine world-Masculine world, the second stanza paints the onslaught on Nature, the third stanza describes the result /consequences of a forestation on the animals and an innocent world. The innocent world, here, comprises of birds and insects, and the word "we" referred to poet and his relatives who stand apart from the masculine world. While birds and insects have to leave the tree in despair, the innocent world has to nothing to do but to witness the slaughter in horror and fascination. They were nothing but passive agents in the process of a forestation. Soon they left Baroda for Bombay, which is a great Metropolis with dense population and technology. This shift from Nature to a Place of Technology shows man's preference for technology and the exploitation of Nature. Technology has

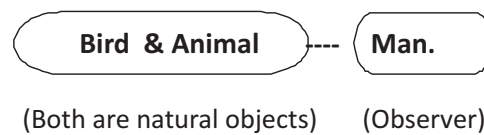
attacked Nature for its own benefit and true natural beauty remains a mere dream for the next generation. That is why the narrator is haunted by the ghost of Banyan tree. In Bombay, one can see a concrete jungle but he longs for the contact of Nature. The impact of onslaught on tree was so deep that the ghost of tree visits the narrator in dream. So he remarks-

*" Soon afterwards we left Baroda for Bombay,  
Where there are not trees except the one,  
Which grows & seethes in ones dream, it's aerial roots  
Looking for ground to strike. "*

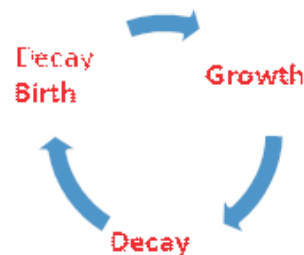
### III

#### Eco-Criticism and Other Poets – A Study

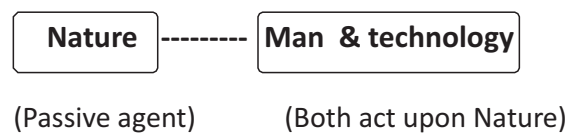
After illustrating the poem in the light of eco-criticism, lastly, I would like to compare in brief three different poems of different poets. Dilip chitre is essentially a product of modern age. Natural it must be that he has witnessed afforestation, technological development, urbanization, progress in science and its effects on both-Nature and human beings. That is why his poem is full of cries of Nature, while Robert Frost and Emily Dickinson belong to early 19th the century, when technology was in its cradle and Nature had her all wonders to show. So they appreciate or celebrate natural phenomenon in their poems. Even if we compare them closely, we find that Emily Dickinson is more near to Nature and describes her lovelier aspects; while Robert Frost who belongs slightly to later generation shows how nature changes and how nothing is permanent in nature e.q. his poem " Nothing gold can stay". Emily Dickinson in her poem " A Bird Come down The Walk " shows an eco-cycle giving importance to bird-animal i.e.



Here man is a passive watcher/observer. Her images of nature are remarkably different from that of Robert Frost, In his poem " Nothing Gold Can stay " Robert Frost shows a cycle of Birth- Growth –Decay.



It is interesting to note that he includes man in the cycle. Here man has equal share to act. But Dilip Chitre's poem brings increase in man's share in cycle . Here he show a cycle of



It is also interesting to note that here nature is passive agent and man and technology act upon her; exploit her for their benefits.

This brief study of three different poets brings us to conclusion that the progress in age and technology had evil effects on Nature and if we do not take urgent steps against it, the posterity may loose many beautiful natural sight and "Eden may sink into grief". Therefore we shall have to search for some lasting solution to protect our environment and to save our

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"Mother-Earth"

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