



Theoretical Representation of Ecocriticism in Dhruv P Bhatt's *Oceanside Blues*

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Abstract— Dhruv P Bhatt, who is excellent in Gujarati language and literature, is one of the foremost pioneers of impudent ecocritical issues in narratives in Gujarati literature. Contemporary accomplishments of Gujarati literature are depicted in Bhatt's *Samudrantike*, written in the Gujarati language in the foundation stage. Subsequently, the text was translated into English as *Oceanside Blues* by Vinod Meghani in 2013. The focus of the novel offered is set against the background of his own experience. The present paper titled, "Theoretical Representation of Dhruv P Bhatt's *Oceanside Blues* seems to explore the theory of ecocriticism, environmental problems, importance of coastal area of Gujarat, sea, festivities related to Gujarati Khaarava' as well as culture and taboos of Gujarati maritime community with the variegated characteristics.

Keywords— Ecocriticism, *Oceanside Blues*, Dhruv Bhatt, Environmental Issues

I. DHRUV PRABODHRAY BHATT: A SHORT INTRODUCTION

Dhruv Prabodhray Bhatt, who is exceptional in Gujarati language and literature, is one of the leading discoverers of audacious environmental and ecocritical narratives in Gujarati literature. An acclaimed novelist Dhruv Bhatt has given notable works such as, *Samudrantike*, *Tattvamasi*, *Agni-kanya*, *Atarapi*, *Karnalok*, *Akoopar*, *Lovely Pan House* and *Timirpanthi* in ninth-tenth decade. He writes the *Agni-kanya* (1988) based on *The Mahabharata*, with Draupadi as the main character. But as a novelist he increased reverence with the publication of *Samudrantike* (1993) and *Tattvamasi* (1988). Bhatt, the inventor of the original regional narrative *Samudrantike*, is a successful novelist of the late last century who valued quality over substance. With this work, he has become a successful novelist and has been awarded. Dhruv Bhatt's second literary work *Tattvamasi* is also in a form of novella, but like *Samudrantike*, this work has been published in a threefold form of nautical novella - essay - travel - narration. In *Tattvamasi* the creator has collectively described art and craft by his unique craftsmanship. The thought of Indian culture, religion and spirituality –

philosophizing, giving it a literary form, has cultivated many interesting dimensions. His thoughtful novel *Atarapi* (2001) presents an inspection that is striking due to its richness of structure and language. Through *Atarapi*, the originator presents an exceptional view of life and gives an excellent example of philosophy in the form of art. The characters, events, atmosphere and language of this novel, which is unique in many ways, are harmoniously presented. His other novel *Karnalok* (2005) earns him the title of experimental novelist, as the author has succeeded in conveying the suffering of the children of Balashram by taking the character of Karna from the *Mahabharata*.

Akoopar and *Lovely Pan House* chronologically published in 2010 and 2012 as well as the *Timirpanthi* written in 2015, these three novels expressing different subjects remain the notable works of him. Respectively, the experiences grown from suicide in the first novel and the love and attraction towards nature and rural man become the main theme of the novel and expand the work. By selecting a specific area of Saurashtra, the writer has put what he saw and knew in the novel. As a result, this work has become the sole work of the author. In the second novel the author narrates the experiences added during the

journey of life. But in it they present something completely opposite to nature. The writer of the lower strata of society and the virtues found in them is a constant presence in this novel, in the third work he presents the story of a particular community or caste, the Odia caste, with a description of their occupation. Why does the society respect those who were born to parents of criminal caste? Jain has been ignored by the society. However, the hero-heroines of the novel eventually follow the voice of the soul and get the self-knowledge and make their lives brighter. The true story of the work is achieved when such gloomy characters become shiny at the end of the text.

He has been awarded by several literary organizations for his *Samudrantike*, *Tattvamsi*, *Atarapi*, *Karnalok* and *Akoopar*. Some novels have been translated into Marathi and English languages. A prolific writer-novelist who has achieved a unique place and respect in Gujarati literature in the modern and contemporary era.

II. ECOCRITICISM: MEANING AND MATTER

Ecocriticism is an exploration and an instigation of the association between human beings' actions with physical as well as biotic components through literary imagination and cultural text in the contemporary era.

Environmental problems and challenges are the most significant theme tune of this newly emerging theory. In this day and age; extracted oil from the ground, depleted groundwater, establishing industries and factories; polluted air, nuclear war, pandemics, ecological collapses, global warming, acid rain, deep well, frozen planet, reforestation, over population and many more are the most destructive harms of the mother earth. Ecocriticism covers risky problems of environment through the specs of literary and cultural imaginative works. Finally, environment is an essential source of human being and living creature's life expectancy. Conservationists, Eco critics, environmentalists and nature lovers throw light on pay attention towards nature and be concern of it; just because of, we all are breathing and existing through 'Environment'. In this manner, the growth of human race is as a consequence of the environment. Although the major query is that what is the basis of the human's development? Such an extent, we are living through environment; therefore of course, individual's advancement is only on the mother earth. In brief, we should put environment in the centre of our growth. As long as, we are talking about environs; the world of animals, plants, biotic and physical components as well as water, sky, land, air and fire etc....are the parts and sub-parts of it.

The definition of the word "Ecocriticism" can be found neither in the Oxford English Dictionary nor in the Merriam-Webster Dictionary. But, in these same dictionaries, the word 'Eco' is given the meaning and context of new words such as, putting 'eco' in front of 'logy' – 'Ecology', 'economics and 'ecofeminism' in the same way. Loretta Johnson who works at Lewis and Clark college, tried to coin the term "Ecocriticism" in her own article named "Greening the Library: The Fundamentals and Future of Ecocriticism", which published in Choice magazine in the year of 2009. Loretta stated that,

"Eco," from the Greek root oikos, means "house." The OED cites the German oecologie as the first appearance of "ecology" (in 1876), meaning "the branch of biology that deals with the relationships between living organisms and their environment." Just as "economy" is the management or law of the house (nomos = law), "ecology" is the study of the house. Ecocriticism, then, is the criticism of the "house," i.e., the environment, as represented in literature." (*Choice*, 2009, p.7)

So, Loretta very nicely explains how the different words are formed through this definition. Ecocriticism is also called homegrown analysis. In consequence, nature's harms are illustrated in literature with whims, sentiments, fantasies, visions and veracity. But most of the critics believed that the word was first used by William Ruckert in the year of nineteenth seventy-eight. He plays the role of the mother who gave birth to term 'Ecocriticism' and the father who raised it. Truly, this USA based critic wrote an article termed "Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism", which published in Cheryl Glotfelty and Harold Fromm's *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*. In which, he wrote that, ecocriticism involved "application of ecology and ecological concepts to the study of literature." (Glotfelty and Fromm xx) Understanding this sentence will make one realize that reading of literature, covering the vital facet of natural balance, creating a fresh, writing a new variety of exertion. Cheryl Glotfelty – (A retiring first professor of literature and environment with more than thirty years' career at University of Reno, Nevada USA along with a daughter of scientist) gave pure meaning of Ecocriticism' in her worldwide reputed book titled *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, collaboratively written by Harold Fromm (University Associate at Arizona University and a prominent member of Institute of Environment) in 1996. According to Glotfelty,

“What... is Ecocriticism? Simply, put, Ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and physical environment. Just as Feminist Criticism examines language and literature from a gender-conscious – perspective, and Marxist Criticism brings an awareness of modes of production and economic class to its reading of texts, ecocriticism takes an earth-centered approach to literary studies.” (Glotfelty.1996, xix)

The justification of this meaning is as this is a scripture that contains the facets of the natural world and texts (e.g., animate and inanimate). Just as feminism sheds light on women's rights in words through a new work of creation, so too in Marxism, a consumerist distinction between the rich and the poor is made by conjoining Karl Marx's philosophy with texts. While post colonialists articulate the story of British canon and suppression, this nature-inspired day-to-day problems with Literature is a new branch of a new kind of cultural and contemporary theory; whose roots are spread all over the world in contemporary times. Glotfelty and Buell hold a similar view, but Glotfelty attentions on the day-to-day human practices and obligates commitments to it. The mostly recognized ecocritics, apart from Lawrence Buell and Cheryl Glotfelty, are Harold Fromm, William Howarth, William Rueckert, Michael P. Branch, Glen A. Love and Estok. William Howarth defines ecocriticism as the study of “the relationship between species and habitats, and what of it is in the text.” (p. 69) Describe the terms of Howarth, ecocriticism is a science that studies the connotation among creatures, beings and non-beings' livings.

III. ECOCRITICISM IN DHURUV P BHATT'S *OCEANSIDE BLUES*

The celebrated novelist Dhruv Bhatt, who brought freshness of subject matter and language in novel writing of Gujarati literature, wrote a juvenile story called 'Khowayelu Nagar'. Of course, as a writer he rose to fame with the novel *Samudrantike*. This work composed in a simple, neat, plain style was awarded by Gujarati Sahitya Parishad and Gujarati Sahitya Akademi. His hobbies and interests include **wandering in the wild**, staying with strange families, taking children for **jungle walks** on the **coast and islands**, telling stories, helping them understand curriculum subjects and creating interest in other subjects, **wild photography**, etc. *Samudrantike* published in Gujarati language in 1993 and translated into English as *Oceanside Blues* by Vinod Meghani in 2013. From 1980 to 1985 every year from 1st May to 8th May, the author

travelled along the **sea coast** starting from **Gopinaath to Jhaanjhmer, Mahuvaa, Jaafraabad, Diu, Somnath, Chorwad, Porbundar, Harsiddh and Dwarikaa in Gujarat**. He experienced this journey at different times. Separated into chapters 1 to 28, this journey was practiced by the author at diverse periods. Alienated into total twenty-eight chapters this novel span 147 pages.

As the author wrote in the introduction; “Most of the characters are based on individuals I had met during these oceanside treks in diverse places, on various occasions and under different names. involved in this story are met with different names from time to time. One or two were inspired by granny's tales I had relished during my childhood. To assimilate all of them in a single period I have woven them in imagined events. All I aspired was to render what I deeply felt to sensitive readers, who, I hope, would treat it in the form they prefer.” Although, the author has not identified this text as a novel, a travelogue or a travelogue. But Babu Davalpura has called this work an autobiographical novel composed in his own style, which is not a nautical travelogue or a travelogue. The protagonist of *Oceanside Blues* is anonymous. Engineer hero has been living in the area for three years as part of his work to **survey the agriculturally unproductive wasteland around the coast and prepare a report recommending the establishment of a chemical zone here**. As the reason for staying here for government job work arose, it became possible to get acquainted with various places and characters.

No permission is required to enter a farmer's field in this region. If someone in need takes from the heap of wheat in the attic of Ekaliya Hanumanji's temple, it is not considered theft. Of course, in a fuel-scarce region, forest firewood has to be forcibly stolen at night, which is a whole different matter. Here, there is nothing but **carts, boats, horses, donkeys in vehicles**. In this place, there was once a huge forest, wild animals like **leopards** and **rare birds** like **Doodhraaj** are seen, the forest has faded and it has not been a suitable environment for animals and birds. Gujarat has got a wide coastline. This work contemplates the environment with the depiction of the real folk life of the fishermen, Khaaravas, farmers, government servants etc. living here in Sagaratta, this work gives a different kind of Gujarati novel literature.

In today's mechanized and industrial age, it is imperative to protect the environment from pollution. Environmental problems arise when normal life processes are disrupted. Natural calamities have started increasing due to some element of nature being distorted and not allowed to remain in its original form. What destruction the sea brings when it storms. It is illustrated in this work. Due to the problems that have arisen in the environment due to man-

made disturbance, the question of life and death arises for man and other creatures to live their normal life. Saboor's parents lost their lives due to hunger and thirst during the famine. Life in this region is full of hardship. Dayaram works both as a lighthouse keeper and as a shopkeeper. Krishna also does a work farmer and works as a boatman. In shop-like conditions, people go to work in the city, come back after rains, and do agriculture. These people are poor and religion less, barely living on the dark rocky soil. However, Khimirvanti is self-righteous full of leprosy. These people with different beliefs are not so educated. Of course, the mathematics of life is very well understood. These people who consider the sea as a god or a living and present human being like us also believe that when the waves are tired, the ever-thin sea goes to sleep on the raft to rest. Maharan would scold everyone and if he got irritated, he would remove the money transfer. **Bhensali** went and visited **Bhensalipir**, may the sea always give way to him who comes back alive. Bawa, priest, fakir, all have faith in it. The unnamed protagonist of the work hails from the city. His life is different. Vivekgiri, Jaanaki, Vaal-baai, Aval all see the real Jagdamba Annapoorna incarnated on earth. Shamji stubbornness too. Do and also go to the labour of road construction. How easily, naturally he can live in the midst of many different situations almost every year in a single life. Wondering where this power will come from, the hero gets the answer from his own mind: "I have learned from nature that nature bestows its basic qualities on a man who lives close to nature. Naturalness, shamelessness, fearlessness and simplicity as in appearing as we are." The hero of the work is worried about the fact that if a chemical zone is built in this district, the ugliness, ugliness, and ugliness of the city culture will enter here as well, as a result of which the problem of environmental preservation will arise. On the arrival of the rainy season, the hero feels guilt when he sees the colourful peacocks in the cliffs behind the **Varaah temple in Ashad**. is:

“મોર જેવા રૂપાળા પંખીડાને જીવન ટકાવી રાખવા સમુદ્રની ભેખડોમાં ભટકવું પડે, એટલી હદે ઉજ્જડ થતો જતો ખારો પાટ. કદાચ તે હવે પોતાની જીવનશક્તિ ખોઈ બેઠો છે. બાકી હશે તે રસાયણોનાં કારખાનાંઓ પુરું કરશે...વિનાશની ભૂમિકા રચીને જતો રહીશ, આ ધરતીના રહાસઘા જીવોને તેમનું બાકીનું જીવન ટકે ત્યાં સુધી જીવાડવાની જવાબદારી દરિયાને સોંપીને.” (ભટ્ટ, ધ્રુવ. *સમુદ્રાન્તિકે*. પેજ નં. 84)

“The salty plains have turned so barren and infertile that the peacock, an angelic bird, has to struggle up and down

the seashore rocks for survival. The land had, probably forever, lost its sap, its will to live. Remnant, if any, would be consumed by the factories producing chemicals. I would not be saying back to witness the fate of Banyan, Almond and the remaining Coconut trees. I would disappear after enacting the scaffold for their strangulation and handing over to the ocean the responsibility of rescuing from death the creatures who might somehow manage to survive the annihilation, if at all.” (Meghani, Vinod. *Oceanside Blues*. p.107) The protagonist, who is constantly distressed, writes to his friend Parashar and expresses his anguish. This immovable strewn shore, the rippling salt water, the splashing water in the small coves and the innocent people with the same serene eyes.... On this uninhabited salt flat, the night crowded the sky.... The sea where the heroes have played like children, on the waves. are waved. The protagonist's closeness to nature is distressed by the realization that the presence of trees, lack of arable land and sparse human population does not make a place suitable for manufacturing toxic chemicals. The enormous beauty of the sea environment, the silence that speaks volumes, the immense peace, the music of the sea, all this will disappear if it becomes a chemical zone. The sadness, pain, pain of the protagonist of the story is because it has to be the cause of all this. Bengali Baawa-ji explains it by saying:

“બસ ઇતની સી બાત પે રોતા હૈ.... તું સોયતા હૈ તેરે રપટ લીખને સે યાં વિનાશ હોગા ઇસ જગા કા રૂપ બદલ દેગા તું ઔર જો કુછ ભી હોગા ઇસકા જીમ્મા તેરે સર પે રહેગા /... ભૂલ જા બચ્યું ભૂલ જા... ઇતના ગલત ક્યો સોયતા હૈ તેં ઇસે કુછ નહિ કરેગા તો ભી યે સબ બદલને વાલા હૈ.... તું ખુદ ભી બદલા નહિ હૈ બોલ જૈસા આયા થા આજ વૈસા હી રહા ભવા યે તેરે કારખાને બને ગે તે તો કીતને સાલ સૌ, દો સૌ. ઔર અનંતકાલ કે સામને સૌ -દો સૌ સાલ કી કીમત ક્યા હોગી પરિવર્તન હોતા હૈ, અચ્છા હૈ, યા બુરા યે તો અપના અપના નજરીયા હૈ, ૩ અચલ પ્રકૃતિની ઉત્કાંતિનો સિદ્ધાંત બાવાજી સુપેરે જાણે છે: “સુન એક દિન ધરતી નહી થી ફિર ભી પ્રકૃતિ થી ફિર ધરતી આગ કા ગોલા થી ફિર ભી પાની આયા, ફિર પેડ-પૌધે આયે, મિટ ગયે ફિરસે બને પ્રકૃતિ સદા સર્વદા મુક્ત હૈ. કોઇ ઇસે બાંધ નહિ પાતા ઔર ન ઇસે કોઇ બીગાડ સકતા હૈ, ઇતના સમજ લે. ફિર લીખ દે ઇચ્છા મે આવે સો. જો તેરા કામ હૈ વો તુજે કરના હી હૈ.” (ભટ્ટ, ધ્રુવ. *સમુદ્રાન્તિકે*. પેજ નં. 92-93)

“Is that all? You’re crying over a trifle!” Do you think by writing your r’p’rt you’d ruin this land, that by drawing up plans for changing face of this land, you’d be responsible for outcome?” Forget it, son.....A blunder it is to assume so. Even if you do nothing, everything’s bound to change.” Haven’t you too changed?.....Tell me, are you same as you were when you first arrived ‘ere?’ There you’re! Even if your factories’re built ‘ere, how long’d they last? Hundred years? Two hundred? In infinity, what’s a century or two?” “Change is inevitable. Whether good or bad’d depend on eyes that see it,” Listen. There was a time when earth did not exist. Then too nature existed. When earth was born, a ball of fire it was. Then came water, seaweeds and plants. They also perished, only to be reborn. Nature is always absolute, unconfined. No one can ever fetter it or foul it. Get that into your head. Then go ahead and write what you will. You must carry out your task,” (Meghani, Vinod. *Oceanside Blues*. pp.119-120) Bengali Baawa-ji is aware of the secrets of nature he understands, knows, feels nature.

Environmental pollution has become a worldwide problem. Deforestation of animals, birds and trees are the main causes of pollution. The belief of the so-called educated, modern urban people may require that all creations of nature are created to serve man. As the author says, actually education should be such that it teaches to love nature and the author gives an opportunity to love the nature. Baawa-ji explains the law of change of nature that whether the alchemical field arises or not, nothing remains as it is. No one can stop change. If a chemical zone is constructed in this region, people will get livelihood. Comforts will be obtained. All the things that we consider necessary to be happy will be here.

“....નહી હોય માત્ર ધૂળ ઊડાડતો ખારો પાટ, એવો ખાલીપો, આ નિર્જન રમ્ય સાગરતટ, પરીઓ અને કિન્નરોને રમવા આવવાનાં છૂપા સ્થાનો અને આ આકાશની પરમ પારદર્શકતા ભલા! જે માનવી વિકાસ અને સ્મૃધિની ઇચ્છા કરે, તેને આટલી કિંમત તો ચૂકવવી પડે ને ! આ રમ્ય જગતને હરામયાવી નાખવા પહેલો ઘા કરનાર તો હું જ છું : “બાવાના શબ્દોને નાયક યાદ કરે છે; જો નયા બનેગા એક દિન વહ ભી નષ્ટ હોગા’ ભૌતિક સુખસમૃધ્ધિ પ્રગતિ માટે ચૂકવવી પડતી નાનકડી વાગતી કિંમત કેટલી તો ચૂકવવી પડે ને ! આ રમ્ય જગતને હરામયાવી નાખવા પહેલો ઘા કરનાર તો હું જ છું.” (ભટ્ટ, ધ્રુવ. *સમુદ્રાન્તિકે. પેજ નં. 121-122*)

“However, something would be lost forever. These saline swamps swept by dust-laden tornadoes, this vast emptiness, this deserted yet extremely picturesque seashore, these ravines – probable hideous of frolicking fairies and angles descending the heaven to play hide and seek on the earth – and this crisp, transparent sky. Yes, dear, it was not too high a price to pay, after all, for those who aspired progress and prosperity!“What will be done shall be undone someday. Everything was bound to perish one day only to sprout once again!” (Meghani, Vinod. *Oceanside Blues*. p.156)

The protagonist’s report is over. Intends to submit transfer application with map and report and to go on leave till transfer. He prepared himself till the time of resignation, he cannot stay here when the road construction machines come here. The protagonist hears an unknown voice from somewhere: “I admit that the earth is indeed pleading and few are capable of hearing and responding to the pleading. This has been established since time immemorial between nature and man Which is out there, somewhere in this structure there is a hidden path which is the path. There is practice, somewhere in this culture there is a hidden path through which the inert and the conscious can communicate with each other. In the work, the mental struggle of the protagonist has been at the center considering the nature, the environment, these movements of struggle which keep rising in the mind of the protagonist are placed in the mind of the reader and the novel ends. This work suggests a way back to nature in this time of isolation, disorganization, disintegration.

IV. CONCLUSION

The writer in *Oceanside Blues* provides the warning literature that is needed in modern times by awakening the mind of the listener to think about the environment in this work. The rhythm of harmony with nature has been broken in urban society. Here the author gives an opportunity to reflect on it. Elements of nature can experience the primitive rhythms of life. Ornithologists like Noor-bhai, even though they are economically backward, their heart wealth is full! As a result of attachment to nature, full of heart, several characters of the work Noor-bhai, Saboor, Sadhubaba, Krishna etc. live in poverty.

Due to modern urbanization, human beings are alienated from the original life and rhythm of nature. To get this return, if we go to the people who live in the lap of nature, then we will realize that to what extent we have lost the internal splendour and prosperity! What we got in return was the closeness of nature, the beauty of life, the music we lost.

