

**ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS ON ECOLOGICAL INTEGRITY
BETWEEN HUMAN-NATURE RELATIONSHIP IN BARBARA
KINGSOLVER & JOHN STIENBECK SELECT NOVELS****G K KATHERINE RANI**Ph.D. Research Scholar,
Department of English,
Vels Institute of Science, Technology &
Advanced Studies (VISTAS)
Pallavaram, Chennai – 600117

&

DR. M RAJALAKSHMIAssistant Professor of English,
Vels Institute of Science, Technology &
Advanced Studies (VISTAS)
Pallavaram, Chennai – 600117**ABSTRACT**

*Environmental Ethics is a branch of philosophy that critically analyze the moral relationship between human beings and the natural environments. As our environment is destructed due to climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution intensify, burning of fossil fuels, deforestation, extinction of mass species, unsustainable agricultural practices that poses a serious threat to the health of the planet and future generations. Environmental ethics challenges anthropocentric views by emphasizing the intrinsic value of all forms of life, ecosystem and the biosphere. Environmental ethics emphasizes the need for a shift from anthropocentric view to Ecocentric and biocentric perspectives. Environmental Ethics emerged on 1970s in response to growing awareness of Ecological degradation and ethical framework in addressing environmental concerns. Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962), The first Earth Day (1970) prompted to rethink Humanity's moral relationship with nature. This paper examines the integration of ethical framework of sustainable environmental towards ecocentric worldview providing the moral foundation for transforming societal values and behaviors in alignment with ecological limits. Barbara Kingsolver's *Pigs in Heaven* (1993) and John Steinbeck's *The Pastures of Heaven* (1932) novels emphasizes on human-nature interconnections and Ethical responsibility towards Environmental stewardship. Both the novels Focuses on providing sustainable environment through ethical relationship between human-nature relationship.*

Keywords: Environmental ethics, Environment degradation, Social responsibility, Human-nature Interconnection.

Special Issue

284

10th February, 2026Website: www.langlit.org

Contact No.:+91-9890290602

One Day National Conference on "Reimagining the Anthropocene: Discourses of Literature, Language Culture, and Cinema in an Era of Planetary Change" organised by Department of English, MMK AND SDM Mahila Maha Vidyalaya Krishnamurthypuram, Mysuru.

Indexed: ICI, Google Scholar, Research Gate, Academia.edu, IBI, IIFC, DRJI



1. Introduction

Human beings are beautiful creation by God. Science says that human beings have appeared through biological evolution. Humans have been interacting with environment since people first walked on earth. They interacted with the environment for their food, water, shelter and maintenance. The survival of organisms depends upon a delicate balance between themselves and with various components of the environment. Any disturbance, damage or adverse change in the quality of the environment poses a threat to the survival and the well beings of organisms, which is a great concern to all of us. Natural environment is getting depleted due to human activities and natural causes.

The rapid growth of population, industrialization and unsustainable use of natural resources have significantly contributed to this problem. The main cause of the environmental exploitation is deforestation. Deforestation in tropical rainforest is a major contributor to biodiversity loss. Desertification affects wildlife population and contributes to food insecurity. The Arctic is warming faster than any other region, endangering polar bears and other wildlife. Global warming is causing ocean acidification, which affects marine life including coral reefs. Eutrophication from nutrient pollution can lead to “dead zones” in water bodies, killing marine life. Acid rain caused by sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxides, harms both terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems. Forest are cut cut down to make spaces for agriculture, Industries and urban development. This leads to loss of biodiversity, disruption of the water cycle and increased level of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. Pollution is another major problem. Air pollution from vehicles and factories and including particular matter and ground-level ozone, poses risks to human health and ecosystems. Water pollution from industrial waste and sewage, soil pollution from excessive use of chemical fertilizers harm both the environment and living organisms.

Climate change is one of the most pressing issue of this 21st century. Climate change is increasing the frequency and extreme weather events. Resulting in global warming, melting glaciers, rising sea levels and extreme weather events such as floods and droughts. Human well being and other living organisms is also affected. The burning of fossil fuels releases carbon dioxide, major greenhouse gas contributing to global warming. Contaminated air and water causes respiratory diseases, skin problems, ageing and other serious illness. Over fishing threatens marine biodiversity and health of the ocean ecosystems. Methane emissions from livestock and agriculture are potent contribution to climate change. Black carbon , or soot , is a significant pollutant that worsens climate change and impacts human health. The depletion of ozone layer allows more UV radiation to reach Earth, increasing health risks. The loss of polar ice caps is contributing to the rising sea levels and habitat loss of wildlife.

The loss of biodiversity weakens ecosystems causing natural disasters. Exploitation of natural resources is another cause of environmental degradation. This not only destroys wildlife habitats but also contributes to soil erosion and climate imbalance. Excessive extraction of minerals, fossil fuels and water resources disturbs natural ecosystems and

Special Issue

285

10th February, 2026

Website: www.langlit.org

Contact No.:+91-9890290602

One Day National Conference on “Reimagining the Anthropocene: Discourses of Literature, Language Culture, and Cinema in an Era of Planetary Change” organised by Department of English, MMK AND SDM Mahila Maha Vidyalaya Krishnamurthypuram, Mysuru.

Indexed: ICI, Google Scholar, Research Gate, Academia.edu, IBI, IIFC, DRJI



reduce their ability to regenerate. Industrial activities release toxic chemicals and greenhouse gases into the environment. Soil pollution caused by excessive use of pesticides and chemical fertilizers, decreases soil fertility and disrupts food production systems. The Environmental ethics grew up in the works of Rachel Carson and Murray Bookchin as the first Earth Day in 1970. It explores the moral relationship between humans and the natural world. It poses to question our duties towards the environment and other species. The field is crucial addressing climate change where human have far reaching consequences challenging anthropocene activities. Philosophies like anthropocentrism biocentrism and ecocentrism like Aldo Leopold's land ethic offer different perspectives on our moral obligations. Recognizing nature inherent worth, independent of human utility, promotes respect and conservation.

For example Bishnoi community in Rajasthan has a centuries old tradition of protecting trees and viewing them as sacred. Understanding the ecological interdependence of all living things emphasizes the impact of our action on the entire ecosystem. The Chipko movement, villagers hugged trees to protect the natural environment and prevent deforestation, highlighted the emotional bonding between forests and local livelihoods. The Paris agreement, a global effort to climate change reflects a shared responsibility for environmental stewardship. Studying environmental ethics equips to address the pressing environmental challenges and fosters ethical thinking about our values and actions. Ethical consideration promote equitable distribution of environmental benefits, burdens, addressing disproportionate impacts on vulnerable population.

2. Environmental Ethics and Motherhood in *Pigs in Heaven* (1993)!

Barbara Kingsolver's *Pigs In Heaven* (1993) opens in rural Kenchuky, where a women named Alice thinking about her married life. The title refers to Cherokee legend about six bad boys spirits turned them into pigs. Kingsolver emphasizes that human well being cannot be separated from the health of ecosystem and communities. The story begins with three years after protagonist Taylor Greer living in Tucson illegally adopted Turtle, a Cherokee girl found in Oklahoma. Turtle's adoption initially reflects human-centered decision. Taylor rescues a child without understanding the cultural and ecological consequences. The Cherokee Nation represents an indigenous environmental ethic rooted in stewardship. Taylor and Turtle are living in Arizona. While on a trip to Hoover Dam, Turtle witnesses a man called Lucky Buster is a grown man living with his mother, has the habit of running away from home fall into a

spillway at the Hoover Dam. The Cherokee nation realizes her adoption wasn't legal under the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978. Annawake Fourkiller, a lawyer from the Cherokee Nation shows up their home to confront Taylor about Turtle's adoption. Annawake saw Turtle on Oprah and recognized her as a Cherokee girl. Taylor explained the peculiar circumstances of the adoption.

Annawake shows up telling Taylor that Turtle cannot belong to her. Turtle begins to have bad memories of her abusive past. Taylor and Turtle arrives in Las Vegas and immediately taking away little money. Meanwhile Cash Stillwater living in Wyoming

Special Issue

286

10th February, 2026

Website: www.langlit.org

Contact No.:+91-9890290602

One Day National Conference on "Reimagining the Anthropocene: Discourses of Literature, Language Culture, and Cinema in an Era of Planetary Change" organised by Department of English, MMK AND SDM Mahila Maha Vidyalaya Krishnamurthypuram, Mysuru.

Indexed: ICI, Google Scholar, Research Gate, Academia.edu, IBI, IIFC, DRJI



has come to live there from the Cherokee Nation, having lost his mother, wife and one of his daughter in the same year. The Cherokee tribe suffered an inordinate amount at the hands of white Americans. Annawake explains that his pursuance is also for Turtle's benefit. Alice Greer Taylor's mother calls up her cousin Sugar and goes to Cherokee Nation to talk over Turtle's case. Turtle recognizes Cash and breaks down in cries of happiness. Turtle spend three months of the year on the Nation. Kingsolver describes her family decision to raise their own livestock farm in Virginia. Taylor's growth reflects an environmental ethic of humility. The solution honour both emotional bonds and cultural responsibility. Through *Pigs in Heaven*, Barbara Kingsolver advances an environmental ethic rooted in interdependence, cultural respect and justice.

3.Human-Nature Interconnection and Moral Values in *Pastures of Heaven* (1932)!

John Steinbeck's *Pastures of Heaven* (1932) is a collection of interconnected short stories set in a small, isolated valley in Monterey County, California. The valley's serenity contrast with human flaws, to live in harmony with nature. The valley, known as Las Pastures del Cielo ("The Pastures of Heaven") is idyllic and beautiful. During the colonial occupation in 1776, Juan Bautista a Spanish corporal capture a group of Indians. The idyllic valley was occupied by the settlers in the mid 19th century. The story begins with the group of children discovering the valley. They are struck by its beauty and name it as "The Pasture of Heaven".

After a series of misfortunes, the Munroe move into a farmhouse that the locals believe is cursed. George Battle age of 18 marries and bear a son. His wife is soon committed to an insane asylum. The revival of sinister effects of the ranch are foreshadowed in John Steinbeck's brief portraits of the Munroe family members. Alice is strikingly beautiful and shark covets her. Fearing suitors he constantly inquires about her condition. Seventeen-year-old Munroe, styling himself a casanova seduce Alice at a local party. Another story about Uncle Charlie and Andy (his nephew) is about life leads him to trouble. A minor murder becomes a local scandal. Steinbeck explores the contrast between innocence and misperception. Junius Maltby to the valley to escape the corruption of the city and becomes a beloved figure, teaching children freely.

His unconventional methods worry the towns people and he remained kind and innocent. The "Vigilante" an enforcer in the community. A local man takes justice into his own hands to protect the valley. His overzealous action create tension and conflict. "The Thief" a young boy, a pretty thief enters the valley thinking he can get away with his crime in peaceful community. He faces unexpected consequences. A family moves into the valley seeking a fresh start but struggles with old habits and interpersonal tension. The gardener attempts to create perfection in the valley, reflecting human desire to control nature. Two feuding neighbors attempt reconciliation but their pride and misunderstanding complicate the process.

Steinbeck emphasizes on Nature as intrinsically valuable and not as a resources for humans. Humans have a moral responsibility to respect and preserve the environment rather than to exploit it. Many characters attempt to control or manipulate the land. For

Special Issue

287

10th February, 2026

Website: www.langlit.org

Contact No.:+91-9890290602

One Day National Conference on "Reimagining the Anthropocene: Discourses of Literature, Language Culture, and Cinema in an Era of Planetary Change" organised by Department of English, MMK AND SDM Mahila Maha Vidyalaya Krishnamurthypuram, Mysuru.

Indexed: ICI, Google Scholar, Research Gate, Academia.edu, IBI, IIFC, DRJI



Example gardener cultivating perfection, where human prioritize their desires over ecological balance. Steinbeck also portrays how to access valley's resources affects human relationship. Some families and individuals struggle to thrive despite the fertile land. The valley acts as the moral mirror and some stories show characters failing to respect the valley. Exploiting resources without understanding consequences. Steinbeck's valley is "Heavenly" because it embodies moral and ecological balance.

4. Conclusion.

In *Pigs in Heaven*, Barbara Kingsolver explores environmental ethics into the story, through interconnectedness of humans, animals and the land. The novels emphasizes that human well being is deeply tied to ecological stewardship, sustainable living respect for non-human life. Ethical principle that humans have each other shows their responsibility. The novel advocates the ecocentric worldview, where humans are the parts of the larger ecological system. It critiques the anthropocentric attitudes that exploit or disregard nature, showing ethical living requires awareness, respect and sustainable action.

Taylor Greer is the biological mother of Turtle and a strong independent women who values family and community. Taylor shows deep care for not only for Turtle but also for the other animals and lands she interact with. She represent a epic nurturing and protecting life. Her rural lifestyle demonstrates awareness of human dependence on natural resources, reflecting a sustainable and ethical relationship with the environment. Turtle is a young child caught between adoptive and biological families. Turtle's innocence mirrors human innate connection to the natural world with empathy, a trait that reflects ecocentric ethics, where caring extends to all forms of life. Opal is Turtle's adoptive mother and represents urban life, rules and societal norms. Taylor and Turtle symbolizes a framework toward environmental stewardship and relational ethics.

Taylor's Environmental stewardship emphasizes on care for all life protecting Turtle, living sustainably in rural settings. Turtle's ecocentrism, interconnectedness explores childlike empathy towards animals and environment. Opal shows ethical stewardship by learning to respect non human life and rural values. While animals and land mirrors moral values, treating animals with care and empathy reflecting the ethics and land as a source of life. In "*Pasture of Heaven*" John Steinbeck examines how environmental ethical values relate morally and ethically to the environment. It is a collection of interconnected short stories set in a lush valley in Monterey County, California.

The valley itself is treated almost as a character but it is vulnerable to human desire and carelessness. For example the children of the valley play and explore freely, showing harmony with nature. But adult ambition is sometime disrupts this balance. Steinbeck portrays that human folly has consequences on land. For instance neglecting the environment can cause subtle decay in the community. Many characters see the land primarily as property or as a way to achieve personal dreams, showing tension between human ambition and environmental stewardship. Steinbeck often hints that ignoring the ethic leads to emotional or moral decay in characters. For instance Alvarez

Special Issue

288

10th February, 2026

Website: www.langlit.org

Contact No.:+91-9890290602

One Day National Conference on "Reimagining the Anthropocene: Discourses of Literature, Language Culture, and Cinema in an Era of Planetary Change" organised by Department of English, MMK AND SDM Mahila Maha Vidyalaya Krishnamurthypuram, Mysuru.

Indexed: ICI, Google Scholar, Research Gate, Academia.edu, IBI, IIFC, DRJI



family cultivate farm and valley represents human trying to dominate and shape nature for personal gain. Their relationship shows the tension between human ambition and ecological balance. Martha character shows close connection towards nature watches the valley represents deep ecological consciousness that appreciates the intrinsic value of the land and community, showing harmony with environment. Tom Castro's dream of propriety uses the land for personal goals.

Embodies human self-interest often at the expense of environmental and social harmony. Children in the valley explore, play and live in natural spaces. Emphasizes ecocentrism representing innocence and natural harmony, showing human can coexist respectfully with the environment. Pastoral land itself acts as a silent observer and influence on human action. The valley is fragile and morally significant reflecting their ethical choices and humanity. Steinbeck's "Pasture of Heaven" presents delicate ecosystem where human morality and environmental ethics intersect. The stories suggest a land ethic, humans must act responsibly toward the environment to maintain both ecological and social well being. Environmental ethics provides a moral compass for navigating the complex relationship between humanity and nature. By integrating ethical principles into policy and practice, we can strive towards a more sustainable environment.

WORKS CITED.

1. Buell, Lawrence .*The Environmental imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the formation of American Culture* .Harvard UP, 1995.
2. Buell, Lawrence . *The Future of Environmental Criticism: Environmental Crisis and Literary Imagination*. Blackwell Publishing, 2005.
3. Garrard, Greg. *Ecocriticism*. 2nd ed., Routledge, 2012.
4. Glotfelty, Cheryll, and Harold Fromm, editors. *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*. University of Georgia Press, 1996.
5. Carson, Rachel. *Silent Spring* . Houghton Mifflin, 1962
6. Leopold, Aldo. *A Sand County Almanac*. Oxford UP, 1949.
7. Taylor, Paul W. *Respect For Nature: A Theory of Environmental Ethics*. Princeton UP, 1986.
8. Kingsolver, Barbara. *Pigs in Heaven*. Harper perennial, 1993.
9. Steinbeck, John. *The Pastures of Heaven*. 1932. Penguin Books, 1995.