

Conclusion

Summary

This concluding chapter draws upon the analysis made in previous chapters to understand the importance of studying Kingsolver's works from an ecocritical perspective. Barbara Kingsolver reiterates the need to bring environmental awareness to the reader in both her fiction and non-fiction. Kingsolver has repeatedly emphasised the potential of her novels and non-fiction to increase the readers' awareness of any environmental crises. Her writings explore themes ranging from appreciation of nature, preservation, conservation, connection to land and place, the interrelation between family and community in a given ecosystem, and the Anthropocene. The dissertation studies the environmental engagement of Kingsolver in her novels: *Animal Dreams* (1990), *The Poisonwood Bible* (1998), *Prodigal Summer* (2000), *Flight Behaviour* (2012), and non-fiction: *High Tide in Tucson* (1995), *Small Wonder* (2002), *Last Stand: America's Virgin Lands, with photographer Annie Griffiths Belt* (2002), and *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle: A Year of Food Life* (2007).

The introductory chapter retraces the emergence and development of ecocriticism as a field of academic research. The critical discussions in this study are structured using the theoretical development of ecocriticism and the "four" waves of ecocriticism. The core chapters are analyses based on four specific centers of interest or perspectives. These are (i) Concept of place: Local to global (bioregionalism and eco-cosmopolitanism), (ii) Ecofeminism (Ecofeminist partnership ethics), (iii) Ecocritical Animal Studies: interdependence and interrelations between human and nonhuman species, and (iv) Anthropocene fiction and non-fiction.

In the chapter “Knowing Our Place”, Kingsolver’s fiction and non-fiction are studied through the perspectives of bioregionalism and eco-cosmopolitanism to foreground the transition from local to glocal. Kingsolver’s works focus on place-specific issues of a bioregion and propose a path for global concern, an alternative new way to connect and live in the global biosphere. Her writings about places breathe a spirit of “accumulation of local soil and local culture”. But they explore the immediate landscape and extend beyond the limits of the bioregion, and merges with larger patterns. They connect with what Heise (2008) calls “a variety of ecological imaginations of the global” (Heise 62). In a broader sense, there is a coalition between the local knowledge of the land, refined to address the environment to a larger scale.

The chapter “Kinship Systems” studies Kingsolver’s fiction and non-fiction as new sets of recovery narratives from the perspective of partnership principles and the broader precepts of ecofeminist thoughts postulated by philosophers like Carolyn Merchant, Karen Warren, Val Plumwood, and Ynestra King in their works. These sets of narratives can be designated as “Recovery Narratives” (Merchant 256), presenting what Plumwood voices as “a new relationship with nature” affirming “continuity and kinship for earth-others as well as their subjecthood...and agency. It will be...open to the play of more-than-human forces and attentive to the ancestral voices of place and earth” (qtd. in Merchant 256).

Scott Slovic, while stating the various modes that emerged in the Fourth Wave, advocates Ecocritical Animal Studies, another mode that “seeks to challenge

and complicate human ways of thinking about another species” (Slovic 360-362). The chapter “Growing Trust” studies Kingsolver’s works from an Ecocritical Animal Studies perspective. Her creative works take a nonhuman turn as they examine the human connectedness to multiple species. As “nature oriented” (Murphy 263) literary texts, they continue to focus on the fact that humans are not separate or exceptional, but integral to the natural order of things. These literary texts engage the readers’ attention to ecological and environmental themes. They represent the nonhuman world that includes flora, fauna, landscape, and issues related to nature conservation and the ecological crises. Readers have become aware of various environmental concerns, overconsumption of natural resources, species decline, and other issues about the physical environment that arise out of the contesting idea of anthropocentrism. She emphasises that the survival of the planet depends on highly specialised and sustainable forms of human-nature entanglements and social organisations with the unique capacity to counter the increasing urgency of environmental problems.

The chapter “Paradise Lost” studies her works representing large-scale environmental problems, particularly climate change, species extinction, and growing toxicity. Kingsolver's writings foreground a functional understanding of the role of humans in the complex and shifting dynamics of the whole ecosphere. As a scientist and biologist, Kingsolver, in her fiction and non-fiction, has analysed the reasons that have snowballed to the present the present geological age, Anthropocene, and its consequences.

Contribution of this Dissertation

The scholar realizes the fact that this research on Barbara Kingsolver and American ecocriticism is neither exhaustive nor complete. At the same time, this dissertation is unique as it studies four theoretical perspectives based on the “four waves” of ecocriticism. There is very little research on Kingsolver's works, from the perspective of Bioregionalism and Eco-cosmopolitanism, Partnership Ethics, Ecocritical Animal Studies, and Anthropocene literature. Further, this study is also unique in the sense that it interprets Kingsolver’s fictional representation of challenges of Anthropocene, ranging from species extinction, climate crises, toxicity, hazardous waste, and above all, imbalance of the whole planetary ecosystem.

Limitations of this Dissertation

The scholar has tried to compare the works of Kingsolver with other writers’ works from the Indian subcontinent. The field of environmental writing in India is vast and is rapidly gaining a global dimension. In *Ecology and Equity* (1995), Gadgil and Guha comment that India’s ecological problems are not limited within the debate of environmentalism of poor and rich. The issues are significant beyond the boundary of subsistence and survival. Writer-activists and poets like Mahasweta Devi, Arundhati Roy, Valmik Thapar, Vandana Shiva, and Sugathakumari have contributed to the mainstream environmental writing. Many other writers from the subcontinent foreground such environmental problems. These issues are forest rights, climate change, species extinction, habitat loss, forest

fragmentation, displacement of tribal people, depletion and destruction of biodiversity, hazards of open cast mining, and building of dams, etc. Writers like Arundhati Roy, Mahasweta Devi, Amitav Ghosh, Manoj Das, Gopinath Mohanty, Indra Sinha, writing in English and regional languages of the subcontinent, have explored India's environmental issues in their works. A comparative study between the writings of Barbara Kingsolver and writers from India may not be fair to one or the other, considering the unique cultural contexts of these environmental issues. The most significant reason that makes Barbara Kingsolver's writings singular is the perfect unison of scientist and poet. The scholar has found that there are practically no ecological-literary responses parallel to this novel and unique combination in Barbara Kingsolver, in either mainstream Indian literature in English or translation. In the 'Preface' of *High Tide in Tucson*, Kingsolver has talked about how her works epitomize poetics and science. Her editors often invite her back from 'poetics to science' while dealing with timeless themes on the environment crises (Kingsolver 1995).

Given the transdisciplinary nature of Environmental Humanities, this field offers an exciting and promising research area in Indian Literature in English and regional languages that explore the nature of present environmental crises. The scholar is curious to explore those spaces in the future.