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Abstract: *This paper, by establishing a connection between human responses towards nature and ecological awareness, examines how Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai (a Sufi poet) depicts and reflects these aspects in his poetry. His verses portray the ecological, philosophical & spiritual themes that pictorially paint the beautiful scenery of his motherland, Sindh Pakistan. The study focuses on the poetic world of Shah Latif, which creates a sacred connection between humans and nature, showing his deep love for environmental awareness. It examines how Shah Latif, in his poems 'Sur Sarang', 'Sur Asa', 'Sur Sasui-Kohiyari', 'Sur Khambat', 'Sur Karayal', and 'Sur Kamod', translated by Elsa Kazi, portrays nature and human interactions with it. The study explores how his ecological vision can be applied to modern Eco-art discussions, offering new perspectives on the relevance of his environmental ideas in today's context. Based on the theoretical framework of Eco-art by Cheryll Glotfelty (1996) and Félix Guattari (1989/1990), as well as other ecological works, this research looks at Shah Latif's poetry in terms of these concepts concerning his reflections upon nature and viewpoints regarding environmental changes. This study's specific focus on the representation of the ecological themes in Shah Latif's poetry, his delineation of environmental issues, respect for nature and the promulgation of awareness among folks adds more to the dynamics of Eco-art in contemporary literature.*

Introduction

Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai (1689-1752), a venerated Sufi poet in Sindhi literature, is distinguished for his mystical and spiritual poetry. According to G M Sayed (1996), "Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai is one of the great Sufi poets and intellectuals of South Asia. He is a notable enlightened humanist, who firmly believed in the metaphysics of the unity of being and turned the socio-psychological implications of this metaphysics into subjects of his impressive poetry" (p. 3). His magnum opus, Shah Jo Risalo, is a collection of poems that encompasses various themes, namely devotion, love, and nature. Shah Latif's poetry demonstrates his intimate connection with nature, as evident in the way that natural elements do not merely provide background scenery—rather, they are integral components that carry deeper spiritual and philosophical connotations. Kaneez Ume Farwa (2020) notes that Shah Latif's "poetic words arranged in logical order make a strong connection to our sense of listening, singing and understanding. The poet portrays the scenic beauties and spaces with possible options to point the

distinctiveness of many environmental objects” (p.38). By employing natural objects like trees, water, rain and wind, metaphorically his poetry appeals to the inner self and arouses feelings of reverence for Nature, and inspiration for the purification of hearts, souls, bodies and minds. His poetry imparts an implicit message to the readers to develop a soulful connection with nature. Moreover, “[t]he poetry of Hazrat Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai is rich with colors, seasons, innovations drawings of various concepts related with art culture and social surroundings” (Farwa, 2020, p. 37). Shah Latif’s works have been studied and critically analyzed, and many researches and books have been written on his life, poetry and message; however, this paper focuses on exploring the deep ecological cognizance and connection to nature in Shah Latif’s Poetry and underscores the interdependent association between human beings and their environment. Erstwhile, literary works on Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai’s poetry have mainly focused on his philosophical and spiritual contributions. However, there is an emergent interest in comprehending how his poetry depicts his profound connection with nature. Shah Latif’s poetry, specifically, his folk literature, deeply rooted in Sufi traditions, also emphasizes the harmonious balance between the environment and all the species living on the Earth. Sudhir Singh (2017) argues that in folk literature, “[t]he planet Earth has been created beautifully balanced to cater to the needs of all the species living on it. Man intervened and interfered with its process and disturbed the life cycles of all the living and non-living components of this Earth” (p. 38). Shah Latif’s poetry and folk literature raising the consciousness of people can equally be compared with folk literary works produced in other parts of the world, which discuss a “balance between all forms of life and have raised human awareness among societies where people believe in this form of knowledge” (Singh, 2017, p. 38). His recurrent allusions to natural objects and his metaphorical and symbolic representation of natural entities point to a deep connection between ecological, social and cultural domains.

Aim of the Study

Various studies are available on the poetry of Shah Latif, and they give an insight into his work, but no comprehensive analysis has been carried out from the ecological point of view to find what themes he presented in his Sufi poems that can be related to environmental awareness. Hence, this research aims to fill this gap to some extent by exploring the scope and understanding of ecological themes in Shah Latif’s poetry. Nevertheless, in the context of the study, there has been limited research produced to assess Shah Latif’s poetry in terms of his ecological awareness. For this purpose, related studies are being consulted to identify Shah Latif’s consciousness from an ecological perspective, including the representation of natural space as a sacred area and the support he shows in his poetry for making a harmonious connection with the environment.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this research is to examine Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai’s poetry and to determine the depth of his ecological consciousness. By analyzing the selected poems and their themes, this paper aims to accentuate Shah Latif’s understanding and connection with nature and its applicability to modern environmental apprehensions. By focusing on Shah Latif’s relatively underexplored characteristic, i.e. ecological perspective, this work adds to the broader understanding of his poetry. Additionally, it contributes to the literature on ecological awareness in literary studies by providing insights into the cultural and historical background in the context of Sindhi literature.

Methodology

The study aims to establish which characteristics in eco-art can contribute significantly to Shah Latif’s poetry, and how, as an artist, his work contributes to the awareness of ecological changes and the connection between humans and nature. The selected poems as primary sources “Sur Sarang”, “Sur

Asa", "Sur Sasui-Kohiyari", "Sur Khambat", "Sur Karayal", and "Sur Kamod", translated in verse by Elsa Kazi; are analyzed by focusing on ecological themes and the objects of nature reflected in these verses. Using a qualitative view of the data, this research applies textual analysis to a few poems from Shah Jo Risalo and employs close reading techniques for interpreting ecological issues identified in poetry. In addition, to untangle the findings of this study and compile Shah Latif's ecological consciousness in a larger frame, secondary source data, e.g., books, articles and literature by scholars /several critiques are used.

Theoretical Framework

The analysis is carried out through an Eco-literary lens considering representations of nature and environmental themes in the selected poems. According to Cheryll Glotfelty (1996), "Eco criticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment' . . . takes an earth-centred approach to literary studies" (p. xviii). For Geeta Sahu (2014), "Eco criticism is the study of representations of nature in literary works and of the relationship between literature and the environment" (p. 23). This interpretation allows us to interpret Shah Latif's environmental values and his philosophy of the nature-people relationship as represented by him in his poetry. With the help of concepts from Cheryll Glotfelty (1996) and Félix Guattari (1989/1990), besides some Eco-writing, this study looks into eco-pomes by Shah Latif with respect to ecological approaches as well as environmental changes he alerts for.

Analysis and Discussion

The Representation of Nature in Shah Latif's Poetry

This section of the paper, in light of its research aims, carries a detailed analysis of Shah Latif's translated poems and refers to Eco-art approaches illustrated by theorists and scholars. Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai's poetry is distinguished for its plentiful use of natural symbolism. In "Sur Sarang," (Rain Song), the monsoon rains are portrayed as a symbol of life renewal. The rainwater will rejuvenate the parched land with divine loveliness and spiritual revitalization. Shah Latif writes:

O see, the low' ring, somber skies!
the cumulous clouds have poured
Their big-dropped showers; now take out
your herds, prepare, and rise;
Leave lower grounds, to uplands go
and practise old device,
Take your provisions and supplies...
despair not of God's grace. (Sarang, Kazi, 1981, p.95-X)

The message here is of hope and green fields for the residents and farmers, as the heavy showers of rain are depicted as symbols for the renewal of life. As a Sufi poet through his art, Shah Latif imparts a message to the people to take advantage of the favourable ecological conditions and make adjustments in their lives according to the environmental changes. Hannelie Warrington Coetzee (2022) likewise points out that "eco-art does not simply 'communicate science to assembled publics. Rather, eco-art is an interpellation that may enable people to become more environmentally attuned" (p. 6). Shah Latif further signifies the ecological impact of rain as the harbinger of happiness and hope for the revival of green nature for the inhabitants.

Today too from the northern side
the rain-quails notes reach here;
The ploughers ploughshares ready make,

herdsmen are full of cheer...
 Today too nature doth appear
 in rich array of rain! (Sarang- XI, Kazi, 1981, p.95)

The Sufi poet predicts the rain as the harbinger of a green revolution for the inhabitants of the earth. G M Syed (1996) notes that “he has conveyed to them the news to let them hear the echo of revolution in the paralyzed atmosphere of the homeland, the thick clouds from the North which promise to bring heavy rains to the, thirsty land, for the farmers to put their hands on the plough, to end the suffering and pain, to let the fellow country-men to savor success” (p. 125). Linda Weintraub (2012) posits about several themes in her menu of eco-art, and to name a few, we find some, i.e. land use, rainwater, harvesting, farming, irrigation, climate change, and sustainability (p. 21) in the poetry of Shah Latif. Whenever Shah Latif witnesses clouds in the sky, hope for life and liveliness returns to him. The parched lands turn into green fields, and the loved ones will reunite in the transformed human-friendly environment.

Today too there are hopes of rain,
 the clouds are dark and low,
 O friends, with monsoons, longing for
 the loved one comes again-
 I hope the rain will water well
 the parched and longing plain...
 Beloved come! my life sustain,
 all seasons then feel spring. (Sarang- XI, Kazi 1981, p.96)

For Shah Latif, the rain is an embodiment not merely of a physical sensation but also a divine blessing, which suggests a deep association between the natural and the spiritual. The cloud imagery and rain frequently used in Shah Latif’s poetry represent kindness, abundance and spiritual purification, which will bring positive ecological changes for the sustainability of human life. Shah Latif “prays for Sindh to be green and prosperous. He desires to see Sindh secure from the hands of famine and calamities. When he feels the smell of the winds of monsoon and sees dark clouds stretched far in the skies, and heavy seasonal rains flooding all the places, his joy knows no bounds” (Syed, 1996, p. 46). According to the poet, even animal life craves for ecological change and chants for the blessings of God:

Man, deer and buffaloes do pant
 for rain, ducks hopes for clouds;
 After as though in supplication
 sounds the rain-quail's chant; (Sarang- XI, Kazi 1981, p.96)

Shah Latif’s Eco: Art portends that rain, the cause of green ecological change, brings cheerfulness to birds, cattle and human beings. This also suggests the interconnectedness between life and nature; if the fields are green, the crops grow, and the jaded activities are invigorated for the sustainability of both humans and animals. According to Linda (2012), “sustainability is a measure of long-term viability that is achieved when the disturbances that afflict a system are balanced by its compensating responses” (p. 29). Therefore, according to Shah Latif’s poetry, green ecological conditions are directly connected to human culture, the standard of life, physical and mental feelings of the people.

The hands are full of butter, wives
 with merriment abound;
 Each buffalo for milking brought
 athwart the grassy ground;

In thatches here we never found
mistress and mind so glad! (Sarang XI, Kazi 1981, p.97)

Shah Latif explicitly depicts and imparts the message that favourable ecological conditions enhance sustainability for nature and human social and cultural life. Tatiana Lopes Vargas (2024), advocates that “ecological art sparks subjective responses aimed at raising awareness and driving action on socio-environmental concerns” (p. 1).

Therefore, if awareness about ecological surroundings prevails, the effects will be constructive and pleasurable for the inhabitants of the land. Here, Shah Latif also indicates the social and cultural interactions - that human feelings, actions and changes in the environment are interconnected. About this type of interactive approach in poetry, Cheryll Glotfelty (1996) assumes that “[t]he first Law of Ecology-that everything is connected to everything else-applies to poems as well as to nature. The concept of the interactive field was operative in nature, ecology, and poetry long before it ever appeared in criticism” (p. 110). Lawrence Buell et al (2014) uphold that “[s]ince prehistory, literature and the arts have been drawn to portrayals of physical environments and human-environment interactions” (p. 417). Besides, the change in season is connected to thoughts and feelings, as the green fields and mountains bring solace to humans and animals:

Season's orchestra's in full swing,
fresh showers ease the mind;
On mountain-side so green with grass;
cattle abundance find; (Sarang XI, Kazi 1981, p.98)

Shah Latif's poetry often alludes to the cycles of nature, such as the shifting of seasons, which symbolize the paces of life and spiritual evolution. The monsoon season signifies rejuvenation and renewal, as the rain awakens life on earth, which turns fresh and green. The seasonal cycles in his poetry illustrate the natural rhythms that regulate life, highlighting the significance of living in conformity with these cycles. His consciousness of the cyclical nature of life reveals a profound ecological awareness and gratefulness for the natural order. According to Shah Latif, seasons and the weather changes are also connected to the nature of the ecosystem, and if a man takes care of his environment, there will be no dearth of food because humans will be able to grow in abundance “cucumbers, mushrooms, vegetables food of every kind;” (Sarang XI, Kazi 1981, p.98). Subsequently, the man would grab the opportunity to benefit as the ecological transformation carries succour for the people, because “[t]he grain is cheap, and brimful now of butter is each jar” (Sarang- XI, Kazi 1981, p.99).

Ecological Awareness and Preservation

Shah Latif, in his poetry, not only sings about the physical and spiritual blessings of nature, but he also warns people to take care of the natural objects - the sources of climate change, lest the ecological implications would be disastrous. In “Sur Asa”, he writes:

Would of the august secret
I divulge one whit
Trees would burn up,-unfit
For growth all earth would be. (Asa V, Kazi 1981, p. 51)

The message is loud and clear, if people don't take care of trees and don't plant more trees, green fields and mountains would become barren and life on Earth would be terrible. Similarly, Félix Guattari, the theorist in his ecological work *The Three Ecologies* (2005), objects that we have challenged the Earth enough and are now on the brink of ecocide” (p. 3). The cutting of a tree, Shah Latif compares with the slicing of life – a being. Glotfelty (1996) referring to such attitudes towards nature, posits, “[t]his is what

ecologists like to call the self-destructive or suicidal motive that is inherent in our prevailing and paradoxical attitude toward nature" (p. 107), and "[e]ver since man became a numerous species he has affected his environment notably" (Glottfelty, 19996, p. 3). According to Shah Latif's green ecological vision, trees are the lifeline for the survival of the ecosystem; if humans continue with their cutting, with time, life will become extinct on the earth. Shah Latif's poetry uncovers a multifaceted ecological consciousness, accentuating the significance of living in harmony with nature. His verses often bemoan the obliteration of natural habitats and advocate for a reciprocal interaction between the environment and humans.

When he writes to give reverence to the earth that gives life and protects the trees that provide shelter, it reflects his ecological ethos, emphasizing the need for environmental preservation and sustainable existence. His verses call for a respectful and harmonious association with nature, underlining the interdependence of all life forms. In his poem "Sasui Kohiyari" (The Mountain Path), he warns the masses:

My being you sawed, as wood-cutters
do cut the helpless tree;
But for decree of Destiny
Oh, who would walk thy stones? (Sasui-Kohiyari XVII, Kazi 1981, p.138)

Shah Latif's verses carry an ethical undertone, advocating for reverence and responsibility towards the natural world. This ethical viewpoint echoes Shah Latif's belief in the sacredness of the natural world and the moral responsibility of humans to safeguard and preserve it. His ecological morals resonate with modern-day environmental developments that accentuate preservation and sustainability. Furthermore, in the poem "Khambat" (Heaven), the Green Latif's Eco-Art about nature & culture speaks even louder for the preservation of trees. Through his poetry, making a connection between literature and the environment, he imparts the message of commitment to the ecological balance on the earth. Lawrence Buell (1995), highlighting this aspect of literature, notes: "Ecocriticism' might succinctly be defined as study of the relation between literature and environment conducted in a spirit of commitment to environmental praxis" (p. xviii). Shah Latif, making a connection between trees and the environment, indicates that if the number of trees is less still their importance is worth millions because life on earth is proportional to its existence.

Two tree-shoots are worth millions...nay
one leaf alone five lakhs will be
Now to enrich his soul he eats,
the wholesome blossoms of this tree-
Here e'en a withered leaf we see
is many, many hundreds worth. (Khambat-III, Kazi, 1981, p. 39)

From an Eco-Art perspective, Shah Latif's pinpointing the importance of trees, mountains and water marks engagement with their realistic role in a green environment. Dana Phillip (1999), highlighting this aspect of literature, corroborates that "from a literary aspect, it marks a re-engagement with realism, with the actual universe of rocks, trees and rivers that lies behind the wilderness of signs" (p. 579). According to ecological perceptions, the more trees and plants there are, the more it will cause rain – the source of life for all living organisms on Earth. Shah Latif, in his poem "Karayal" (The Swan), indicates:

The root of Lotus flower fair
in deepest waters grows-

High soars the humble-bee (Karayal-XXVII, Kazi, 1981, p. 196)

According to the perspective 'Ecology: Home on Earth', the home referred to in ecology "consists of the entire planet that serves as the home for all living organisms of Earth" (Weintraub, 2012, p. 22). Shah Latif conveys a similar perception that pretty flowers, insects, birds and clean water are interdependent on Mother Earth. The polluted water is not a natural habitat for living organisms. Water plays an important role in Shah Latif's poetry, representing life, purity, and spiritual nourishment. In "Sur Sarang", the imagery of rain and rivers is obvious, illustrating the significance of water for both physical and spiritual well-being. Water is depicted as a sacred component, indispensable for both physical and spiritual sustenance. Shah Latif's respect for water indicates its ecological worth and the need for its preservation.

These waters by the cormorants
polluted, soiled they were-
swans are ashamed to enter there
and never venture near. (Karayal-XXVII, Kazi, 1981, p. 197)

In addition, Shah Latif gives a message to humanity through his ecological discourse on birds: if we neglect the environment, pollute the land and fail to protect pure water provisions, we shall find ourselves in tough survival conditions. In the poem "Karayal", which he calls 'foolish swan', the implied address is to the humans:

O foolish swan! with cormorants
do not keep company;
But change the dirty waters, seek
the clean ones speedily...
Or else you'll drink one day...may be
with herons of the swamps. (Karayal-XXVII, Kazi, 1981, p. 197)

For Shah Latif, clean and pure water nourishes plants and flowers, and when the wind blows, its sweet fragrance is carried into the surroundings, creating a pleasant atmosphere for everyone. For him pure water is a gift from the Divine, and clean-flowing rivers bring life to the land. This he describes in his poem "Kamod" (Love-dependent):

Upon the waters transparent,
along the banks float lotus-flowers,
And all the lake rich fragrance showers
as sweet as musk when spring-winds blow. (Kamod-XIV, Kazi, 1981, p.122)

The Connection of Culture and Ecology

Shah Latif's poetry also illustrates the connection between cultural traditions and ecological consciousness. In "Sur Sarang", the cultural traditions and ceremonies associated with the changing seasons and agrarian cycles are portrayed, underscoring the harmonious connection between humans and nature. The farmers, singing of rain, start harvesting in the fields and celebrate together:

The kine-herds sit together now,
relating tales of rain-
O God, who happiness would gain,
must on thy grace rely! (Sarang- XI, Kazi 1981, p.99)

Shah Latif suggests that the practice of these cultural rituals reinforces a connection to nature, which is evident among his people in their daily social, economic, and religious activities, emphasizing sustainability and environmental relationships. In this context, M. Freitas (2008) notes, "the

environment is intricately linked to both nature encompassing human and non-human environments, and to the social, cultural, political, and economic dimensions" (p. 15). In light of the discussion and references from the poems, Shah Latif's concern for the environment and his notion of living in equilibrium with nature remain highly relevant today, given the prevailing environmental issues and climate change.

His poetry embodies crucial literary and cultural perspectives about environmental ethics, and sustainability - an inspiring Eco-poetical compass for the 21st Century. Adrian Ivakhiv (2014) corroborates the idea that most environmental activists and theorists "believe that the ecological crisis cannot be effectively addressed through strictly "technological fixes"; it is, more importantly, a cultural fact" (p. 2), which should be considered, imagined, and deliberated through cultural and literary praxis. Thus, by acknowledging the interconnectedness of social, cultural and economic dimensions, and the inseparability of all living beings from each other and underlining the importance for humans to understand nature as a part of their self-world, Shah Latif's poetic works function within this larger conversation about ecological harmony, sustainability and conservation.

Findings

The findings of the article can be summarized as follows:

- Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai's poetry offers a sensitive relationship between nature and his self, giving way to harmony between man and environment and every living species that exists.
- His poetry raises the awareness of ecology by elaborating on the relationship between natural elements and their role in human life. His work underscores the importance of environmental ethics, advocating for the protection of natural resources such as water, trees, and forests as vital for human survival.
- In his poetry, natural objects represent symbols for deeper spiritual and philosophical meanings: things like rain, symbolizing renewal, and rivers representing sustenance for life.
- Shah Latif's work evidences an integration between cultural traditions and ecological awareness by portraying cultural rituals strengthening bonding with nature.
- His ecological vision is relevant to the contemporary crisis of the modern environmental system and questions of sustainability and conservation.

Conclusion

The above analysis and discussion determine the fact that the poetry of Shah Latif represents the ecological crisis, and calls for a harmonious balance between human practices and environmental changes, which are connected with social, cultural and economic advancement. This study finds that in any form, nature is a continuous phenomenon directly connected with reciprocating human actions. The conventional wisdom in Shah Latif's poetry communicates the concern that natural objects water, trees, green fields, mountains, rivers, and all living organisms, should be taken care of for the preservation of planet Earth, not only for its beauty but for the significant role it plays in human life. To sustain the life cycle on Earth, all living organisms need to be protected, specifically the preservation of water, trees and forests – the lifeline entities for the safe future of humanity – if disturbed will prove fatal for human existence on the Earth. Shah Latif's literary commendations about ecological awareness in his works correlate to the assertion of Glotfelty, who "recommends that revaluing nature-oriented literature can help redirect us from ego-consciousness to "eco-consciousness" (p. xxx). Shah Latif's respect for the natural world underlines the importance of environmental preservation and sustainability and marks his work as very relevant in the contemporary ecological discourse. Thus, his poetry inspires a greater appreciation for the interdependence of all living organisms and reflects on their deep ecological

cognizance and connection to Nature and Mother Earth.

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