

Interconnectedness between Anthropocentric and Eco centric Life with reference to K C Abraham's *A Theological Response in the Ecological Crisis*

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Abstract

The term 'eco' is defined as connected with the environment in the Cambridge University. History of mankind mostly glorifies anthropocentric achievements. Only during the eighteenth century there emerged a movement called 'romanticism' that revealed the upcoming threat of industrial revolution. The objective of romanticism is to glorify nature. This is actually the first seed for of eco centric view in writings which definitely marked as a significant new era in the midst of anthropocentric living. This paper studies how anthropology and ecology are interconnected in terms of freedom and equality with the help of **K C Abraham's *A Theological Response in the Ecological Crisis***

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Ecology is the branch of biology concerned with the relations between organisms and their environment. This is the root for eco literature to emerge and also to hold an inevitable place in today's study as the branch of English literature. Giving proper space for wild nature as well as domesticated nature is the main cry of eco literature. Gary Snyder says, "Wildness can be said to be the essential nature of nature" (Coupe 127). After the world war II, there arose a special focus in USA towards environment which has resulted in Environmental movement. This is a diverse social and political movement voicing out the issues regarding environment. As a result the First Earth Day is celebrated on 22nd April 1970. Hence the awareness paved the way to view the equality between the rights of human progression and the rights of creations progression.

Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* is considered to be the significant publication in the field of eco literature. "The book argued that uncontrolled and unexamined pesticide use was harming and even killing not only animals and birds, but also humans" (Kroll). Murray Bookchin's *Our Synthetic Environment* and Paul R. Ehrlich's *The Population Bomb* also contributed to the growth of eco literature, with their main discussions of nuclear weapons, nuclear powers, acid rain, Ozone depletion and deforestation. Association for the study of Literature and environment is the great aid for the academicians who are interested in environmental issues in literature.

The term eco criticism is used by William Rueckert in 1978. Eco criticism studies literature and environment and also analyses how literature treats the subject of nature. This is an approach based on literature and environment mostly with the discussions on how literature handles nature. Green studies and Eco poetics are some of the other designations in eco criticism. Cheryll Glotfelty's *The Eco Criticism Reader* is the significant work in this field. Lawrence Buell, Simon Estok and Michael. P. Cohen are also the significant writers here. Barry says that "For the eco critic, nature really exists, out there beyond ourselves, not needing to be ironised as a concept by enclosure within knowing inverted commas, but actually present in an entity which affects us and which we can affect fatally, if we mistreat it" (Barry 252).

Eco theology is the branch in eco criticism that focuses on the inter relationships between religion and nature especially with environmental view and concerns. This is actually a response to the complaint that Christianity is an anthropocentric religion. This has emerged during late twentieth century. Christian theologians have started to feel the urge to respond against the complaint against their churches. They want to show how the Bible supports ecological concerns. And they ended up with eco theology.

K C Abraham is a well known eco theology critic who has been working as a professor at the United College, Bangalore. His work *A Theological Response to the Ecological Crisis* is considered to be one among the seminal work of eco theology. The author has brought out the two important discussions, first the threat of ecological crisis and secondly the churches response towards this. The author expresses the seriousness and the urgency which should be felt by the people towards ecological crisis. He also adds that this ecological crisis

should be dealt by the people so seriously in order to avoid the threat to human survival. "The threat is to life in general" says the author. He urges the realization of this danger for the life of the planet. He also sees that though there is threat there is also a growing awareness about 'the destruction of the environment related to socio, economic and political justice.' William Rueckert says,

The problem now, as most ecologists agree, is to find ways of keeping the human community from destroying natural community, and with it the human community. This is what ecologists like to call the destructive or suicidal motive that is inherent in our prevailing and paradoxical attitude towards nature. (Glotfelty 107)

Renewal of the society is based on the renewal of the earth says the author. He supports this view by quoting instances from marginalized people and indigenous people. Small farmers, fisher folk, agricultural laborers are the people whom the author takes for his discussion. Chipko movement or Chipko Andolan non violent and ecological movement is quoted by the author to prove as a witnesses to establish how ecological crisis has become the cry of the poor. Chipko movement in 1970s shows how the poor women embraced the trees to prevent them from being cut out. NVP- Narmada Valley Project is also a witness how government is forcing people to vacate their homes after leaving their houses and lands. KC Abraham also gives the reasons for ecological crisis.

Excess use of Non renewal sources

Pinning of Ozone layer

Gases creating green house effect

Erosion by the sea

The above reasons result in problems like malnutrition and war says the author. But he wants to highlight the response from the church towards this ecological crisis.

Three topologies have been discussed by the author when refers to the church's response to the ecological crisis. The three topologies are humans above nature, humans in nature and humans with nature. In the first topology he discusses how Bible never sets humans and nature in opposition to the interpreters' views. Bertrand Russell, Harvey Cox, Arand Van Leeuwen, Walter Bruggeman and Lynn white are some of the interpreters he is mentioning. In the second topology the author discusses that there is distinction between humans and nature. He quotes romantic poets, some environmentalists and Bible as examples. Isaiah 40:6-8 from the Holy Bible compares people to grass. In the third topology he talks about the cocreatureliness between human and environment.

The author now directly comes to his discussion about the church's response. He highlights the 1990 Korea's Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation, a conference that was held in Seoul which gathered protestant and orthodox churches to 'make covenants and affirmations on their responsibility to creation for the first time in history. He also quotes how the three different models from religion provide its response to ecological crisis. The three models are respectively,

Ascetic or monastic model

Sacramental or Eucharist model

Liberative solidarity model

All these, right from the ancient period, give its response towards ecological concerns. Ascetic model is the oldest model that is prevailing in India where religious life is associated with simple life style with the slogan "small is beautiful". The second model is from Christianity where the sacrament holy communion stands for sharing and love. The third model talks about the church as the place of the weakest and also with the association of whole creation.

KC Abraham is insisting on the new spirituality and also new scale of values. The author talks about two types of powers namely, Self aggrandizing power and Enabling power. The former is associated with autocracy and the later is associated with Jesus Christ's power of love. The author portrays the last supper scene from the Bible where Jesus is serving and sharing his disciples. Jesus stands for equality as well as humility though He is the master. He wins His team with love and care.

The author says that there should be some common ground of solution towards this ecological degradation. To conclude, the author says, if worship cannot be possible on common ground at least, common measures can be taken to prevent ecological degradation.

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WWW.religion-online.org>chapter 8: A theological response to the Ecological Crisis.