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## Uncovering the Environmental and Aesthetical Roots of Nature in Taufiq Rafat's Poetry: An Eco-poetic Critique



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**Abstract:** *The relationship between poetry and nature enjoys timelessness. But the poetry relating to beauty, spirituality, and preservation of nature secures a special place as eco-poetry among other poetic genres. Taufiq Rafat's poetry is no exception when it comes to describing the natural landscapes, flora and fauna, seasonal variations, and human civilization to showcase the relation of man with nature. This study attempts to scrutinize the eco-poems from Rafat's poetry collections *Arrival of the Monsoon: Collected Poems 1947-78 (1985)* and *Half Moon: Poems 1979-1983 (2008)* from two different perspectives of eco-poetry, i. e., environmental poetry to discuss rights of nature and ecophenomenological poetry to discuss nature for nature's sake propounded by J. Scott Bryson and Jonathan Bate, respectively. The study addresses political issues of identity construction through Tuanian topophilia – a sense of belonging with the place through comparative images from the natural world –, environmental abuse or revised sublime such as urbanization, poor management of the residential areas, industrial agriculture, uncertain climate change, deforestation, scarcity of water, extinction of wildlife, and loss of natural habitat, etc. – a postcolonial inheritance – leading to an identity crisis, and reconstruction of lost identity through nature-friendly living under the former subgenre and imaginative impulse revived through the effects of sublime and beautiful on the tired soul of Rafat to create the feelings of respectful awe and love under the latter one.*

**Key Words:** Tuanian Topophilia, Revised Sublime, Identity Crisis, Sublime and Beautiful.

### Introduction

Anthropocentrism values humans more than other species with a view that all the other creatures have been created for the well-being of humans only. Counter to this idea is Robinson Jeffers' inhumanism – the shift of focus from human to non-human. It employs that man is not an

autonomous being or isolated from his environment – a rejection of the "man-in-environment" concept – and there is no hierarchical relationship between man and other species, i. e., biocentric egalitarianism (Naess, 1988). Inhumanism gives birth to ecocriticism. The term ecocriticism was coined by William Rueckert (Rueckert, 1996) in the

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1970s to address the growing climate crisis. Along with this criticism, its sub-term ecopoetry appeared in the 1990s with a rush of ecopoetic anthologies and criticism for poets are the suns who give life to green plants of poetry (Rueckert, 1996). Ecopoetry, generally, relates to the relationship between man and nature, nature as a living being, nature relating to ethical dimensions, or environmental crisis (Buell, 1995). The ecofeminists see it in analogy with patriarchal exploitation of women, while social ecologists see it as the upper class's exploitation of the lower classes. Ecopoetry has been divided into two main branches: environmental and ecophenomenological poetry, where the former is politically charged poetry as it puts focus on the rights of nature, and the latter is non-political imaginative poetry of nature for nature's sake.

The environmental study in postcolonial countries is a source of lost identity construction by connecting man to his land (Said, 2012). Rafat, in this regard, pioneers the creation of a cultural idiom that connects man to his cultural roots through poetry (Rehman, 1991). The description of people, flora and fauna, and topography is brought to life in his poetics, developing a distinct relation of man with nature. Nature is celebrated as having given equal importance to man as propounded in the ecocentric perspective of ecopoetry, and empathy towards nature is carved out. This sense of belonging to cultural land builds a specific Pakistani identity. But the postcolonial baggage leaves Pakistan vulnerable to many fits of environmental abuse (DeLoughrey & Handley, 2011) also. Resultantly, the loss of natural objects, places, and cultural heritage brings an identity crisis.

## Literature Review

Both the perspectives of Ecopoetry – environmental and ecophenomenological – find expression in the works of poets from all over the world. The traces of ecophenomenological poetry are found in Virgil's *Eclogues* in the form of pastorals and in Romantics in the form of nature as a living whole (Walton, 2018). Nature sparks Wordsworth's affective, emotional, ethical, and intellectual concerns that rebuild humanity's lost connection

with nature (Bate, 2013). American transcendentalists view human's connection with nature as significant in terms of aesthetic, moral, and intellectual growth. Emerson feels nature as his spiritual teacher, a resource for living, and a source of beauty. At the same time, the traces of environmental poetry are found in Walt Whitman, who creates an "ecological self," which is the part of all other natural objects bringing about biocentric egalitarianism by adoring the petty things of nature being equal. He mourns over the loss of natural objects as the loss of his own self. Similarly, Thoreau, in *Walden*, shows the interdependence of man and nature by benefitting from nature and not harming it through indulgence in farming, planting trees, nurturing birds and animals, or other nature-preserving practices (Hossain et al., 2018). Chen Jingrong gives expression to her increasing intolerance for the environmental, industrial, and noise pollution of Beijing that has the worst effects on underprivileged intellectuals, babies, patients, tired workers finding night sleep, plants, and the ecosystem in her ecopoetry (Meng, 2015). John Kinsella laments over human destruction of nature in the form of deforestation by the farmers and increasing water salinity that kills the birds in the Australian landscape with a suggestion that humanity in killing natural objects is actually moving towards its own death (Som, 2015). Similarly, Ted Hughes's poetry is an attempt to blur the distinctions between humans, animals, and plants on the basis of similar cellular operations (Lidström & Garrard, 2014), thereby bringing the concept of natural equality or ecological egalitarianism. In comparison, Dinah Hawken gives explicit expression to contemporary nature degradation, the ecocentric perspective of nature as an autonomous self having its own language and laws independent of human existence, and natural descriptions as the source of sensuous pleasure that activates man's creative faculties as seen in the romantics (Newman, 2015).

## Theoretical Framework

Ecopoetry is the poetry of asserting value to natural life, especially non-human. It is the celebration and

appreciation of the natural or non-human world. This poetry defines the instinctual nature of non-human species sans the intervention of consciousness that distinguishes wilderness and the human world or natural or cultural world with a preference for the former one (Clark, 2011). An eco-poem features humans in natural landscapes, seasons, wildlife, green world, metaphors, themes, symbols, and ecological situations. The word 'ecopoetics' has its etymological roots in two Greek words *Oikos*, i. e., home, and *Poiesis*, i. e., making. It is the biological surrounding or home in which humans and non-humans interact with one another (Skinner, 2001). Hence, eco-poets are place-makers who delineate the effects of nature on humans and humans' effects on nature. Susanna Lidström and Greg Garrard (Lidström & Garrard, 2014) distinguish between two schools of eco-poetry – environmental poetry and ecophenomenological poetry.

Bryson (2005), Rueckert (1996), and Thompson (2002) define political eco-poetry as environmental poetry that brings to focus the issues of environmental change due to human intervention in natural life (Pack & Parini, 1993). In this regard, climate change as a negative consequence of human intervention in natural processes, a regretful tone for the loss done to nature and its impacts on future generations, and a protest against human intervention in natural processes to preserve it are given expression (Johns-Putra, 2016). It becomes an activist reading that nurtures care and concern for the ecosystem by introducing conventions of nature description and representation (Walton, 2018). Such poems tend to describe humans from a non-human or more-than-human perspective by relating the instinctual nature of man with that of animals (Abram, 2012). Environmental poems constitute ecotone – a tense border between various ecosystems – that challenges man-made, civilized, scientific, and cultural boundaries as a form of resistance (Arigo, 2008). This border is the intention as a result of human intervention. Christopher Arigo calls human's abuse of ecology "revised sublime" as a result of the human invasion of ecosystems be it politics, industry, or economy (Arigo, 2008).

Bryson marks three distinct features of environmental poetry, i. e., an ecocentric perspective that considers the natural world equal to the man-made world, humility towards human and non-human relationships, and a sceptical approach towards hyper rationality or the over-technologized world.

Its dimensions include contemporary environmental issues such as water pollution, global warming, ozone depletion, air pollution, climate change (Johns-Putra, 2016), animal and plant extinction, population explosion, and deforestation (Abrams & Harpham, 2005), flooding, and soil erosion, etc. This facet of eco-poetry draws attention to the mechanization of life –the product of self-interest, technological advancements, and economic power – as a threat to natural life (Astley, 2007). As a response to modern alienation, ways of reconnecting with nature are suggested through an ecocentric approach.

Environmental poetry involves an awareness of human environmental damage, sympathy for nature, and equal representation of nature with that of the human world. It engages a call to action that makes it a mode of political persuasion instead of contemplation only. Hence, a set of opinions, didacticism, and exposition of the world come up as some of its major contents.

Contrarily, Jonathan Bate (2013) and Charles I Armstrong (2010) define non-political eco-poetry as ecophenomenological poetry, which is the afterlife of the romantic aesthetics or poetry of imagination. It relates an experience with natural objects, which invokes a particular mood in the author, rather than political. (Bate, 2013). The function of eco-poem is to materialize through language the perception of the natural world for its own sake, for poetry is the best medium for the expression and aesthetics of the natural world (Felstiner, 2009). It portrays the perception of the world as a beautiful and permanent form of nature (Wordsworth, 1798) that affects the human psyche in positive and constructive ways. The tranquil effect of the external environment on the ecology of the mind helps to recover peace of mind, which is lost in the age of technology. This facet of nature offers the protection of nature through human consciousness,

not from a political perspective. It develops attachment with place through landmarks and memory to give the man a sense of belonging and security, which is called Tuanian topophilia ([Tuan & Schoff, 1988](#)), i. e., the effective bonding between people and place. Landmarks give self-identity, and their loss becomes the loss of oneself.

## Discussion

This section deals with detailed scrutiny of Rafat's eco-poems from *Arrival of the Monsoon: Collected Poems 1947-78* (1985) and *Half Moon: Poems 1979-1983* (2008) anthologies from political as well as non-political eco-poetic perspectives. The political reading of his poems under environmental poetry comprises four sub-sections narrating a journey of environment-friendly construction. The first sub-section, known as Tuanian topophilia, engages an environment-friendly national identity delineated through bonding with the place, drawing upon comparative images from flora, fauna, seasonal variations, and landscapes. The second sub-section, termed the effects of revised sublime, narrates the environmental abuses as a consequence of postcoloniality. The third sub-section relates the direct consequence of environmental damage as an identity crisis. And the fourth sub-section presents an attempt to reconstruct the lost identity in relation to nature as a cure to the identity crisis. On the other hand, the non-political reading of his poems under ecophenomenological poetry deals with nature's description for nature's sake only.

## Rafat's Environmental Poetry

Rafat's environmental poetry discusses political concerns of identity construction of a newly-liberated country. Rafat represents his nation as nature friendly with images of the natives in the lap of nature. But being a postcolonial nation, Rafat also articulates the damages done to nature to meet the problems created by postcoloniality leading to an identity crisis at the same time. In addition, nature is shown as reactive to all these damages. However, these representations are not without cure. Rafat tries to reconstruct a nature-friendly national

identity as a cure for the damage done to nature. The following analysis of Rafat's eco-poems brings to the forefront all these political issues.

## Tuanian Topophilia

Poets are the homemakers in eco-poetry who create Tuanian topophilia, i. e., affective bonding between man and place. Edward Said's perspective of "spatial imagination" ([Said, 2012](#)) foregrounds the link of poetic images of nature and man to make a new home inspiring a sense of man's belonging with nature. A natural description carried through environmentally charged poetry is one of the defining characteristics of Rafat's poetry that connects man to his place and creates a sense of empathy in man for nature. The new home Rafat makes places man in relation to the regional landscape, animals, birds, plants, and trees. The highs and lows of postcolonial life are given air with the use of imagery coming from nature to create a local idiom encapsulating a nature-friendly cultural identity.

This eco-poetic home is home to leopard to frog, firefly to the goose, rose petal to Sheesham tree, plains to mountainous lands, stream to sea, greenery road patch to wild woods, snowy winter to burning summer, cool May to tepid April, cool breeze to sand storms, monsoon to flood, kettle to electric toast, slat to a chair, village beauty to city grace, relatives to neighbours, mother to grandfather, quack to the doctor, and mosque to the stupa. All the terra firma revolves around a deep relationship between man and nature to dye the national identity in local colours. Rafat employs all these natural entities from the birds' world, animal world, floral world, seasonal variations, and geographical landscapes as comparisons to draw the habits, instincts, faculties, beliefs, philosophies, and ways of living of the natives.

The world of birds decorates Rafat's poetic paraphernalia in beautiful and natural colours connoting the human world. The pair of love birds relates a loving couple is rebelling against the authority of class, race, religion, and cast. The singing birds speak for people who worship publically, and hibernators are the mouthpiece of

pious people who worship privately. The gathering of birds on the polo field at a particular time and their simultaneous rise and fall is the gathering of Muslims in the mosque to offer prayers. The crows are the journalists, relatives gather on important occasions like vultures, eagles are the landlords of the villages, and the owls become the poets. The flashing kingfisher's hunting flight and the golden bird connote beautiful deceit. The geese hunt symbolizes the success of a committed man in achieving his goal.

Rafat's poetry is replete with analogies from the animal world also to suggest the lifestyle of people. The up and down movement of chasing squirrels symbolizes the thinking process of the poets during their creative hours. The ceremony of laying the foundation of a house by offering the sacrifice of a goat in the foundation of a house goes hand in hand with the sacrifices of East Pakistan upon which the building of West Pakistan is erected. Younger brothers are as naughty as bulldogs. The white horse with its long and beautiful hair connotes the beauty of a woman.

Images from the world of trees and plants are also found in Rafat to connote the human world. Mulberry trees, bearing leaves and fruit early, symbolize the people who get mature at an early age. While the old generation is like a pipal tree that has firm roots and is unchanging with changing seasons. The flowing of rice fields into one another is the transfer of cultural heritage from one generation to the next. The ripe fruits are the poems. The story of an ambitious man is compared to a blade of grass that is weak and small on the surface of the earth, but its roots are five feet deep.

Rafat employs images from seasonal variations to conceive human activities. The arrival of the Monsoon in burning summer pulsating rejuvenation in animals, birds, plants, and electric wires analogizes the act of political liberation and Hindu-Muslim riots. The rise and fall of wind storms symbolize sexual intercourse. The outbreak and spread of cancer within the body takes time no less than the swiftness of spring. The cool wind at night reminds Rafat of the sweet memories of his deceased family members. Flood and droughts relate

to the miserable living conditions of the lower strata of society.

The geographical landscapes don't remain behind in Rafat to pulsate nature-friendly national identity. The various difficult steps in achieving one's goal are symbolized by the step-by-step process in the hunting journey that starts in a car on a plain road and leads to a water passage to the marshland to treacherous mountains. The land is compared with a woman who gives birth to offspring and provides a man comfort in her lap. The four directions suggest the expansiveness of sensual emotions. Similarly, the days of a person in his eleventh hour are synonymous with the half-moon which is going to complete its journey. And the final bed of man among earth, trees, flowers, lyrical wind, and drizzling is the portrayal of the man in complete harmony with his natural roots.

To cut the long tail short, the comparisons Rafat draws to signify the habits of people come from regional flora, fauna, seasonal images, and landscapes, placing Rafat's home in a nature-friendly place that recuperate a proud national identity.

### Revised Sublime and its Effects

However, the postcolonial countries are not the 'home' in the real sense attached to this word. The colonial baggage they carry makes them vulnerable to so many environmental challenges after getting liberation ([DeLoughrey & Handley, 2011](#)). Pakistan is no exception to this generalization, being backwards in educational, scientific, and technological fields. It had to face several challenges after becoming independent that halted its way to progress. One of the major problems that Pakistan faces at this juncture is the settlement of refugees. Karachi becomes the hub of this political occupation of land as it is beyond the capacity of the land to absorb numberless people in its lap. The uncontrollable population gives birth to many waves of environmental abuses such as urbanization, industrial agriculture, deforestation, soil erosion, global warming, disruption of the water cycle, biodiversity extinction, and loss of natural habitat. It results in poor management of

residential areas, uncertain climate change, flooding, and drought leading man towards his own destruction, for nature is autonomous and reactive to its abuse. Rafat, advocating an ecocentric approach, portrays nature in hostile images. As a result, man is desired to show empathy for nature.

Ecophenomenological poetry operates on the principles of sublime and beautiful, propounded by Edmund [Burke \(1958\)](#), that engages the awe-inspiring description of dimensionless natural objects that inspire fear and respect in the reader as well as the description of smaller objects like flowers and lakes to inspire the emotion of love and happiness, respectively. Responding to the same idea, environmental poetry operates on the principle of revised sublime, i. e., the abuse of ecology. A number of natural abuses such as urbanization, population explosion, industrial agriculture, deforestation, soil erosion, global warming, disruption of the water cycle, biodiversity extinction, and loss of natural habitat result in flooding, drought, climate change, and environmental pollution ([Fazal & Hotez, 2020](#)), etc. Rafat brings to focus these issues in his environmental poems to build a hostile home.

Karachi is the megacity of Pakistan that is the victim of mega-exploitation of the environment. "Karachi 1968" turns attention toward the problem of the ever-increasing population of Karachi as a consequence of urbanization. The population influx in Karachi from Pakistani bordering countries like India, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, etc., in the form of refugees and from inside of Pakistan, has been on the rise since 1947. The city gives shelter to all migrants dividing it into two parts planned and unplanned squatter settlements. The mismanagement of population growth has divided the metropolitan into two classes – the prosperous upper and the underprivileged lower class – turning the city into a hub of corruption and crime. The city has become a dry place to live in where the clouds of sexual crimes have eclipsed conjugal love.

The land is symbolized by a female figure in literary ecological connotations. To give voice to the revised sublime done to Karachi, Rafat personifies Karachi with the impregnated woman whose belly is subjected to continuous swelling as a

consequence of the exploitation done to her by the city dwellers as well as the migrants. Similarly, "Karachi '79" develops an analogy between people and landscape to signify the cause and effect relationship between the rising level of population and decreasing level of individual significance as: "Taller and taller/ its building are getting,/ and its citizens/ smaller and smaller" ([Rafat, 2008, p. 100](#)).

The high birth rate and population influx increase the demand for residential areas. The unplanned allotments and constructions change the spacious and beautiful city into narrow towns and streets with ignoring the sanitation facilities. The situation gets worst when the flood envelops the city. Heaps of garbage floating in residential areas with no dry place left to step on gives it the look of miserable, devastated, untended, and ignored land. Hand in hand comes to the problem of evacuation with the flood. People are evacuated to safe places through naval boats.

To meet the demand for food for the increasing population, the implantation of industrial agriculture gives rise to deforestation, leaving a bad impact on climate change. Rafat views the climate of Karachi as uncertain since there could be more than one probability of summer, winter, and a mini-rainy season simultaneously. The increasing demand for mechanical products and deforestation have made the city a home to global warming and noise pollution, which is dangerous for living beings. The bad quality of roads, the jostling traffic, air filled with dangerous gases, and piles of garbage on the beach "shortens" ([Rafat, 1985, p. 56](#)) Rafat's "breath" ([Rafat, 1985, p. 56](#)).

Rafat goes on to relate other consequences of deforestation, i. e., scarcity of water, extinction of biological diversity, and the loss of habitat. The scarcity of water turns everyone jealous and selfish. The shortage of greenery offers few trees for the residents and government to plant in their houses and on the roadsides, respectively, on the one hand and the misuse of limited trees by the municipality on the other. The extinction of biodiversity shuts the doors for future research prospects in the field of medicine. The birds are made bereft of their habitat for shelter and food as the "bard sparrow scrounges in the dust-bin" ([Rafat, 1985, p. 6](#)), leading the



ecosphere towards animal and bird extinction. The role of plants and animals in the survival of mankind is not Greek to be explained.

Lack of rain, deforestation, mismanagement of water distribution, industrial effluents, agricultural wastes, and other water pollutants have been pushing the regions of Sindh and Balochistan into the clutches of drought for the last fifty years. Nature is reactive to its abuses in the form of draughts, floods, earthquakes, etc. Correspondingly, Rafat's poem "Draught" portrays the reactionary nature in the aggressive natural images of "pitiless sky", "wilted crops", bony boys rummaging garbage for food, drying well, "leukemious soil", "vulture", and "buffalo skull" (Rafat, 1985, p. 37) to warn man of the consequences of natural abuse. All these images hint at the looming demise of plants, animals, birds, and humans as a result of mismanagement of resources giving birth to the creation of two classes in society. "Another Kind of Poet" is an explicit expression of Rafat's compassion for the victims (lower class) of natural abuses since he claims: "My gods are Despair, Indignation, and the World's Hunger. I am/ the spokesman of the oppressed." (Rafat, 1985, p. 199)

Similarly, in "Karachi 1955", Rafat presents nature as an autonomous and reactionary being giving air to ecocentric notions. The comparisons of sinister natural objects show the reactionary aggressiveness of nature at its abuses at the hand of man. The abuse of nature is ultimately human abuse because the natural biosphere ensures a healthy environment for humans. The natural abuses push man towards his own destruction. Rafat employs the metaphor of soil transplant particle by particle for soil erosion – the removal of the upper layer of soil making the land infertile and the layer moves into the water, risking aquatic life. It causes floods as there are no trees and soil to absorb water during the unexpected outburst of continuous rainfalls. The greenhouse effect – dangerous gases – occupies the air, and ozone depletion makes the dangerous rays of the sun damage the atmosphere of Karachi. The sound of the sea is compared to that of a snake as if the sea is to bite man. In this way, Rafat's ecocentric approach portrays nature as reactionary to technological advances and is autonomous and

independent of man, and not in a hierarchical relation with him, contrary to anthropocentric views.

The responsibility of man towards the environment is highlighted in these portrayals of reactionary nature that challenge progressive narratives of liberal humanism (Milne, 2009). The after-effects of ecological abuse that have pushed mankind to the brink of destruction comment on man's limit over nature. The condition of man has become miserable. Through the image of the cactus lifting its arms in prayer, Rafat skillfully portrays the nature of the cruel exploiter of ecology, i. e., man, but now he is aware of the aftermath of this devastation and is praying for his deliverance. All these consequences turn attention towards an environment-friendly attitude in the use of natural resources. Nature expects empathy and humility on the part of man as a great responsibility over his shoulder.

### Identity Crisis

The fruit of Tuanian topophilia in the lives of natives makes them enjoy a specific identity which is the child of their living places. Rafat's literary globe pictures the populace living in harmony with natural surroundings to have come up with a secure and contented identity. "The Village" bears proof of a grand civilization of four generations having cultural orature, marriage customs, conjugal love, nature-friendly family occupations, thriving markets, transport passages, architecture, hospitable green lands, and different ethnicities to inculcate a proud and nature-friendly identity. But the postcolonial inheritance of the revised sublime of this place makes people suffer from the identity crisis giving rise to many psychological issues. The chaotic footprints of ecotone in the wake of the Indo-Pak wars in the psychology of people leave heart-wrenching aftermath in Rafat's political paraphernalia. The foreign attempt to erase cultural heritage, in addition to the aforementioned issues resulting in revised sublime, leaves people bereft of their mental peace, cultural pride, psychological securities, physical belongings, and self-confidence as they accept a life-in-death situation going back to their ruined landscapes.

Women are symbolized with land owing to their potential fertility and the emotional sustenance they offer to men. Rafat develops an analogy of ecological abuse with the abuse of women in the war. Rape makes even a strong woman lose her self-confidence along with that of innocence with never-healing psychological wounds. The fearful and terrifying description of rape of women goes heart to heart with environmental and landscape damage, i.e., killing of animals, the bombing of residencies, desecration of religious monuments, deforestation, and destruction of markets, passages, and fields. The aftermath of this revised sublime robs the victims of the pride of their identity, and they live the lives of the buried-alive haunted by torturous memories as Rafat laments: "... who can rebuild a broken-heart?" ([Rafat, 1985, p. 32](#))

Cultural heritage is handed down to future descendants from the past civilization as a continuation of collective identity significant for self-assurance ([Lowenthal, 2005](#)). The remnants of antiquity are preserved and restored to protect and continue this identity through a personal attachment. The loss of the cultural heritage of Sialkot makes Rafat nostalgic about his lost identity in his poem "Sialkot". An explicit expression of Tuanian topophilia exemplifies his attachment to his birthplace from where he comes and into which he wants to be buried to become a part of it. The speaker cherishes this identity enriched by the grandeur of the past, which is bestowed on him by his birthplace, but the abuse of its cultural heritage for political purposes makes him confused and sceptical of his identity.

The theme of identity crisis having its roots in the loss of place becomes the subject matter of Rafat's "Kitchens," also, which offers a contrastive account of place as related to human consciousness. Belonging to a natural place encourages natural and unrestricted life as the old kitchen presides over every affair of life in providing solace, healthy food for body and thought, affection, constructive nourishment, cultural heritage, emotional bonding, and practical wisdom to create a natural and peaceful identity in harmony with the natural environment. But the postcolonial effect shifts traditional simple living to a modern way of life.

The neocolonial progressive influences have replaced the awe-inspiring sublime of innocence and belonging with the revised sublime of modern architecture at the hands of exploitation of the previous landscape. The so-called hygienic, modern environment provides a mechanical, composed, tense, restrictive, formal, and sickly human identity, which is as clean as a hospital but lacks the thrilling sense of passion, devotion, caressing, love, sacrifice, sharing, tolerance, and belonging. The downfall of the natural environment brings a cultural and passionate downfall of human identity also.

### **Reconstruction of the Lost Sense of Belonging / Identity**

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The highness of the eco-poet lies not only in highlighting the environmental problems but also in suggesting their remedy to recuperate the lost identity and sense of belonging with the place. Rafat is no exception in suggesting the restoration of natural life to avoid contemporary environmental issues in his eco-friendly poem "A Positive Region". The aforementioned poem is Rafat's magnum opus of eco-poetry to highlight the theoretical stances of eco-poetics, i. e., nature as a source of beauty and sustenance. The description of natural scenes presents nature as a source of aesthetics and sustenance. The romantic view of experiencing nature leaves one spellbound through the description of the natural landscape, flora and fauna, and human life. A waterfall between the mountains peeps through the pine trees which have covered the region. The personification of a waterfall and mountain with a tie on a heaving chest sets the tone for a harmonious relationship between man and nature. Every corner is brimming over with green trees, seasonal crops, animals, and birds. Warm sunlight bathes the region to mellow the fruits and crops. A cool breeze passes over the stream with straight pebbles shining like soda at its bottom. A sudden gust of rain adds charm to the already charming sight. The sight and sound of the region appeal to the aesthetics of a tired soul.

The ecocentric perspective breathes natural surroundings as the source of sustenance. One of the occupations of people is eco-friendly farming as the place offers food crops, cash crops, vegetables, fruit,



and shelter. The region is a habitat for animals and birds. Animal rearing and construction also add to the prospects of people. The clear water of streams and rivers gives protection and security to humans, birds, animals, plants, and aquatic organisms. The trees absorb dangerous gases from the air and release water vapours which bring rainfall, and the air is kept unpolluted, fresh, and healthy to breathe in for humans and animals. After the rain, the water is immediately absorbed by soil and trees, dried in the sun, and falls into the stream and rivers, leaving no flooded sewers. An adequate amount of water saves the region from natural calamities like floods and drought. The healthy atmosphere keeps the dwellers from endemics and blesses them with health, happiness, and creativity, as Rafat contends: "Not a sickly face have I seen all afternoon" ([Rafat, 1985, p. 21](#)).

"A Positive Region" is a clear contrast to the environmental poems that relate environmental damages such as deforestation, erosion, global warming, extinction of biological diversity, and loss of habitat. On the contrary, the poem presents a balanced atmosphere in which humans are living in complete harmony with nature. As a result, nature does not react in the form of a pitiless sky, snaky beach, burning sun, looming vultures, etc., to exterminate man. Rather, nature gives him protection, security, health, sustenance, and peace of mind.

### Rafat's Ecophenominological Poetry

Ecophenomenological poetry is non-political in its rendering of nature because the treatment of nature in literature is for nature's sake only. It is the afterlife of the romantic tradition of poetry that deals with nature as a source of beauty, sublime, imagination, inspiration, contemplation, and creativity. A natural scene inspires the poet to dwell in the valley of imagination as the song of the nightingale makes Keats forget his worldly worries and transfers him into the world of fascination. Similarly, Rafat has many poems to his credit that celebrate the imaginative aspect of nature through his poetics.

### The Poetics of Imagination

Rafat's poems also show a non-political aspect of

ecopoetry. The mention of nature leaves a balmy effect on a tired soul of Rafat. Two emotions of romanticism, i. e., sublime and beautiful, are disseminated through the awe-inspiring description of nature and love-inspiring description of beauty, respectively. The naturally-relieved soul of Rafat, as a result of these effects, restores its creative wings to compose poetry naturally.

The effect of the natural scenes of "A Positive Region" on the soul of Rafat gives him poetic relief from the fever and fret of mechanical life, and he starts dwelling in the dales of imagination in the poetic chariot. The awe-inspiring waterfall amid mighty mountains invigorates him with the sublime that blankets his aesthetics with an ambiguous feeling of wonder and terror at the limitlessness of natural objects. The impossibly lush green fields, colourful spring, seasonal fruits, and charming birds envelop him with a sense of beauty, appropriateness, and love. The poem epitomes the soothing effect of nature on the nerves of city-dwellers. Similarly, "The Village Girl" celebrates the recuperation of rejuvenation in tone, spirit, and content. The natural sight of a village beauty affects Rafat's soul with the balming denouement, and he forgets his present wounds by liberating his spirit to dwell in the labyrinth of the imaginative world to sing the songs of love. Subsequently, Rafat's "Squirrels" is the imaginative continuation of Wordsworth's "Daffodils" in its poeology. The sight of a natural scene – the intermingling of the strips of two squirrels chasing each other up and down the vine – in "Squirrels" transcends his ecstatic soul into the imaginative valley of creativity to record his "spontaneous overflow of powerful feeling" ([Wordsworth, 2020](#)).

### Conclusion

To sum up the discussion, it is concluded that the poetry of Taufiq Rafat is very much ecopoetic in tone, spirit, and content. Both sides of ecopoetry, i. e., political and non-political, have been addressed in his poetic oeuvres. The political function environmental poetry performs in Rafat is postcolonial in nature as it addresses the poetic rendering of nature for identity construction to create a sense of belonging with the place as

Tuaninan topophilia, the environmental degradation being postcolonial inheritance as revised sublime and its effects on psychological identity, and the recuperation of lost identity as a cure to the revised sublime. The relationship between man and regional topography, biota, seasonal variations, and landscapes builds a nature-friendly home for a man to carve out a nature-friendly identity in Tuanina topophilia. But the postcolonial consequences make this home vulnerable to ecological abuse in the form of the population bomb, industrial agriculture, deforestation, soil erosion, global warming, scarcity of water, extinction of biological diversity, and loss of habitat in its revised sublime. These abuses result in natural calamities like drought and flooding showing nature as reactive to these abuses.

Moreover, the postcolonial inheritance of war also contributes to the demise of the natural and cultural heritage, creating an identity crisis. These cultural and environmental losses demand a restoration of the ecocentric approach towards nature to recreate a sense of lost identity and belonging with the place. In addition to it, the ecocentric approach places nature as a source of physical, emotional, and financial sustenance for man. However, the non-political function ecophenomenological poetry performs in Rafat is the poetic expression of the imaginative impulse of romantic inspiration. It deals with nature as a source of aesthetic sense that balms the spiritual self of Rafat through the romantic effects of sublime and beautiful to bring a sense of respect, love, and happiness. As a result of these effects, Rafat's passion for creativity is rejuvenated.

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