

Pantheism in Enid Blyton's
The Enchanted Wood: An Ecocritical Analysis

Dissertation

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Declaration

I declare that the work in the dissertation entitled 'Pantheism in Enid Blyton's *The Enchanted Wood: An Ecocritical Analysis*,' being submitted to the Department of English, School of Languages, Doon University, Dehradun for the award of Bachelor's in English is my original research work.

The dissertation contains the results of investigations, observations, and experiments carried out by me. I have neither plagiarized any part of the dissertation nor have submitted same work for the award of any other degree/diploma.

Vansika

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Certificate

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled ‘Pantheism in Enid Blyton’s *The Enchanted Wood: An Ecocritical Analysis*,’ submitted by Vansika, has been written under my supervision. It is also certified that the work in this Dissertation embodies original research and hard work of the candidate.

The assistance and support received during the course of investigation and all the sources of literature have been fully acknowledged.

Dr. Gazala Khan

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Abstract

The Enchanted Wood by Enid Blyton, is a children's fantasy novel which tells the tale of three city children who come to stay in the countryside. They discover a magical tree in the woods near their house through which they explore different magical worlds. The plants and animals of these worlds are charged with supernatural qualities. In their adventures, the young protagonists interact and connect with the non-human, magical entities. In reading Blyton's novel, her young readers are invited into the adventure and are able to share the protagonists' imagination. Blyton's novel encourages them to connect with their own natural environment. Away from the scientific thinking of the city where the natural world is seen as inanimate resource, Blyton's novel encourages a pantheistic worldview where the natural world is magical, full of mysteries and secrets. Environmental destruction today is the result of western scientific thinking which treats nature as a resource for the exploitation by human beings. *The Enchanted Wood* makes the young generation realize that nature is much more than a resource. Nature is a dynamic force with which humans can connect mystically. This connection can be a source of fulfillment and pleasure. This dissertation explores the relationship between the human and the non-human world in Blyton's novel and how it promotes a spiritual view of nature.

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Chapter One

1.1 Introduction

“Children’s literature dates back to traditional stories, such as fairy tales that were not known as children’s literature until the 18th century and songs that were part of various oral traditions that were passed down before they were published from adults to children.

Children’s literature has been shaped by religious sources like the Puritan tradition or by more philosophical and scientific views affected by Charles Darwin and John Locke. It is known as the "Golden Age of Children's Literature" because many classic children's books were published later.” (Children’s literature)

Enid Mary Blyton (August 11, 1897-1968) was a British children's writer. Enid Blyton's book has been quite famous in the world since the 1930s, with over 600 million copies sold. *The Faraway Tree* is a popular children's novel series by British author Enid Blyton. The titles of the series are *The Enchanted Wood* (1939), *The Magic Faraway Tree* (1943), *The Folk of the Faraway Tree* (1946), and *Up the Faraway Tree* (1951) (*The Faraway Tree*). Her books guide the children to use the method of observation, comparison and documentation to learn more about nature in the process sensitizing them to their environment. Blyton additionally wrote four *Nature Lover's Books*, wherein there's a direct, sustained and didactic engagement with nature. A huge range of Enid Blyton's memories depict the interplay among youngsters and nature. She encourages youngsters to grow to be amateurs naturalists the use of affected person remark as their tool. These books display Blyton's precise know-how of nature and empathy for nonhuman beings.

The story takes place in the magical forest of giant magical trees, the "*Faraway*

Tree" that bears its name. The tree was discovered by three children, Joe, Beth, and Franny, who are moving to a nearby house. Then they go on an adventure on the tree and have friendship and adventures with many non-human friends. They get to have many adventures on top of the tree. Many of the stories by British author Enid Blyton feature protagonists who move from the city to the countryside. This is a common motif in these stories, as well as in *the Enchanted Wood* story. The first book in "The Faraway Tree series", *The Enchanted Wood*, begins with three city kids, Joe, Beth, and Frannie, moving from the city to the countryside because their father has taken a job there.

1.2 Ecocriticism

The writers' attention has only recently been drawn to ecological issues and the danger that ongoing environmental degradation poses to humanity. This sense of worry and how it manifests in literature has given rise to Ecocriticism, a new field of literary study (Kumari 1).

Ecocriticism is a type of literary theory that emerged in the 1990s and continues to do so today. The relationship between literature and nature, Ecocriticism goes beyond that and there are many Ecocriticism in other areas: behavior and ethics. Another aspect is nature, society, or human behavior and what is literary rational nature. It is a study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment. It takes a global approach to literary studies. It is also known as a green study. It started in the United States in the late 1980s and in the United Kingdom in the early 20th century. Cheryll Glotfelty is recognized as the founder of Ecocriticism in the United Kingdom and cofounder of the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment (ASLE). ASLE

has its own internal journal called ISLE (Interdisciplinary Studies of Literature and the Environment). Eco-criticism is shaped by three great American writers of the 19th century: Ralph Waldo Emerson, Margaret Fuller, and Henry David Thoreau.

1.3 Pantheism

Pantheism is the belief that the universe is a manifestation of God. It derives from "theism," which is the belief in God, and "pan," which means all. Therefore, "God is everything and everything is God," according to pantheism. William Wordsworth, who worshipped nature to the utmost level, saw it as a living being and a source of peace and delight. Throughout the 19th century, it developed into the most popular literary form for celebrating nature. For instance, pantheism denies God's different identity. William Wordsworth often underlines the value of nature to one's intellectual and spiritual development. Wordsworth believed that the divine might be seen in the natural world (What is Pantheism in Literature?).

“The Natural Contract”, a book by a French philosopher Michael Serres, was published in 1990. Its title alludes to the need for a new understanding of ethics and politics that included both humans and non-humans, as the Social Contract theory attempted to explain how members of a society conform to the common good. However, from Michele's perspective, this contract was only with humans. This implies that humans are not a part of nature, and that human culture and mind are not innate, and that non-human nature is devoid of spirit and mind.” (Paradigm Shifts: The

Ecological Turns in Literary Studies)

A life-place denotes a profound and respectful relationship to the environment and any nonhuman inhabitants (Rangarajan 64).

Dwelling, or "being-in-the-world," according to Martin Heidegger, is the fundamental quality of Dasein. A structure needs to integrate the interaction between people, nature, and the supernatural in order to convey dwelling (Rangarajan 65).

Heidegger felt that human creativity, whether it be represented through the art of architecture or the writing of poetry, can assist people in truly residing on the planet and mending their damaged relationship with it. What actually allows us to dwell is poetry (Rangarajan 66).

The enchanted wood is a place that enables humans and non-humans to come together and built this life-place with respectful attachment. In dwelling means, there are three elements that should be there: human beings, nature and the divine. In the city, humans are there but not nature and divine. In the country, nature and humans is there but not the divine. In the enchanted wood, all three, human beings, nature and the divine are present. Even Blyton is trying to teach the children, how to dwell, by bringing them together with nature and the divine and with them being human beings. It is also helping people dwell in a way that will heal their fractured relationship with the earth.

In her book *Staying Alive*, Vandana Shiva makes the case that the Chipko movement's gendered nature had a religious foundation because it conceptualised nature as prakriti, the life-giving energy in Indian traditions that is viewed as a "organising factor in daily life" (Rangarajan 120).

Eco-criticism has come to refer to the theoretical approach to the global union of natural, cultural, and spiritual events as well as the use of ecology and ecological ideas in literary analysis (Kumari 3).

Fantasy literature actually presents distinct, non-anthropocentric worldviews. It shows an universe in which the non-human is crucial while also radically changing reality and its presupposition of inevitability and opening up the possibility for rebellious thinking (Nature Vs “Reality” in Fantasy Fiction).

In a sense, ecological literary criticism offers nature a voice in what might be by allowing it to express itself (Aslan, Emine Ulu 716).

1.4 Literature Review

Lewis Carroll's Fantasy, *Alice in Wonderland* published in England in 1865, showed a stylistic change to imaginative and compassionate (Golden age). Children's literature emerged as a literary category, especially during the Victorian era, and works such as Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland (1865)* and its sequel "Through the Looking Glass" came to be internationally known. The golden age of children's literature ended in World War I (National traditions). According to Carolyn Sigler, ethically and practically, Eco-criticism lowers humanity's interest in non-human nature and writing about nature and examines the complex interrelationships between human and non-human (a biocentric view). Despite this lesser emphasis on humanity's place in the world, eco criticism does not ignore ethical or practical concerns for human readers. Similar to the decentralization of patriarchal assumptions and values brought about by feminist theory and practice, the biocentrism of Eco-criticism instead allows writers and critics to examine the interconnectedness of all nature, human and non-human, rather than just non-human nature as a setting and / or a metaphor for the human condition.

Children's literature is typically used with preschool and primary audiences instead of in secondary or tertiary contexts, which can speak to some limitations instead of strengths in current thinking and practice in this discipline (Mackenzie 8).

“According to Kathy O’Brien ‘Teachers often feel intimidated with the aid of using the term “environmental training” and sense unequipped to train the challenge because of a loss of records approximately what surroundings training is and a way to train it. However, the subject presents a great possibility for integrating wide studying into the content material place program, and this at the same time eases the trouble of a way to method the subject effectively. Environmental training consists of such simple understandings as: (1) human beings and flora and fauna have the identical needs, (2) living and nonliving factors are interdependent, (3) human beings have an effect on the surroundings and vice-versa (4) human beings are answerable for their consequences to the surroundings.’” (The Reading Teacher 14)

1.5 Audience and Relevance

Children's exposure to environmental literature has the power to have significant, long-lasting effects that appeal to both sentiments and intelligence (Gaard, 2009: 328).

Through *The Enchanted Wood*, the young children who are the audience or readers have been targeted not just for mere entertainment purpose but also as the young generation and future of the world because the constant needs of human beings have made our mother nature its target since many decades as well as by the increasing technology where the human greed has no bounds, nature is being exploited faster than ever. The fast-paced life

of adults is gradually overpowering the innocent and free world of nature where all the trees, plants and animals had their own space to call home.

Humans cannot escape the influence of nature since their lives and the environment around them are so intertwined. They are therefore required to accept both the blessings and the hardships of nature. Given that nature also benefits from man's actions, this might be considered as reciprocal (Kumari 5).

The adults who constantly have this survival mode of living a comfortable and carefree life has snatched the comfort of flora and fauna and are the cause of imbalancing the ecological system. In return, when it is supposed to rain, there is drought and when it is not, flood is taking many lives and leaving people homeless. For this to not cause further and destroy the whole humanity, Enid Blyton is making the young audience aware of the importance of getting back to understanding the nature and also the significance of shaking hands with the nature's ecological system instead of disturbing the ecological flow of the earth where all dear lives depend.

The author has also tried to give emphasis on pantheistic view of nature where everything seems magical and divine, which gives the audience a sense of security and arises reverence towards nature in them. As is seen in the novel, the kids felt something very magical around the enchanted wood, though it might be their mere imagination, the curiosity they feel after their father tells them to not go farther into the deep woods is enough to make children relate to their curiosity and read further into their magical woods. The child readers will relate to all the curious and imaginative nature they have in-built in them, which is their natural instinct. Since it is also very difficult to explore nature these days due to children growing up in the cities, it is a novel that through the adventures of

these kids in the novel and the opportunity to explore nature in the countryside, away from the city will give a refreshing feeling too to the children. The adventures the kids have in the different lands up on the faraway tree and their interactions with pantheistic characters like moonface, silky the elf, etc and animals who can talk will make the children really interested in natural world.

The grandmother in Ruskin Bond's "An Island of Trees" tells her granddaughter Koki about the strong bond that builds between people and animals if there is just love and compassion (Kumari 6).

The themes of ecocriticism and pantheism are expressed by Blyton in a very enchanting way which is enough to grip the young audience's attention into the natural world of divinity and magic and adventures of the human with the non-human world and also making them aware of nature and its bountifulness towards all the beings. *The Enchanted Wood* and other such nature-related stories and novels gives the young audience so many reasons to connect with nature and animals and to understand them in a better and friendly way. The novel will give the children so many moral values and will to change the way they see the environment and to take care of it more than their materialistic belongings. The novel that has eco-critical elements and pantheistic elements has definitely the power to impact the young audience on the importance of conserving nature and animals and maintaining the balance of nature as well as being grateful and respectful for everything nature and animals has provided them. Since the problems of deforestation, pollution and other harmful human activities for comfortable lifestyle is destroying the planet and flora and fauna species are getting extinct,so this will make the young readers aware of the nature

needs and will help them become responsible citizens and participate in protecting nature in future. This is the reason i researched on this topic.

The objective of this study is to analyze relationship between human and nonhuman in Enid Blyton’s part 1 of “The Magic of Faraway Tree series” –*The Enchanted Wood*.

- 1) How is nature projected by children’s point of view, and
- 2) How the relationship between human and non-human is shown in the novel?

I’m trying to answer these questions through my dissertation. Chapter 1 lays the introduction of the entire thesis and is divided into subdivisions. First part of the introduction tells briefly about the author, novel and the theory through which it will be analyzed. Chapter 2 discusses the events and characters in the book from an Eco critical point of view. Chapter 3 is the conclusion of the entire study and its impact on children.

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Chapter 2

1.1 Analysis of *The Enchanted Wood*

As Joe, Beth, and Frannie jump over a ditch near a country house, they find themselves in a magical forest and its secret and the tree whispering secrets everywhere. In the middle of the forest-a tree with branches touching the clouds, an exciting slippery slide and a cozy house with its huge trunk is shown. Everything around is covered by greenery and flowers and the weird yet friendly folks live there. The children talk only about nature and their enthusiasm tell the readers the bliss of being near nature and to see it like a friend. The novels start with a huge glorification of Mother Nature and her gifts to all the living beings,

especially human beings. The countryside has been also given a lot of importance and the valuable nature and its magic and adventure it has in store for the kids-

Joe exclaimed, "What fun to be in the country. I will become knowledgeable about all creatures and birds! Beth said, "And I'll choose as many flowers as I want." Frannie declared, "And I'll have a garden of my own" (Blyton 1).

It can bring new ideas and perspectives to a child's growing mind about the environment, unlike today's condition of the environment and this can help children to explore a lot of realistic imagination most of which can come true, fortunately, (because they are the pioneers to make it happen) and open up their minds while also giving them space with a little bit of fantasy and creativity and to hope for fresh air.

The frequent description of nature evokes love and gratefulness in the readers towards nature and shows the dependency of humans on nature as well. As this novel can be read by any age group and it would not feel any strange because the reader would be gripped by the description of beautiful sceneries and of nature that the whole novel would be finished by just two readings. These lines can also be interpreted to understand nature until it's too late-

"There were a few scattered spots of sunshine here and there, but not many because the trees were so dense. There was darkness and greenery, and a little bird nearby was singing a strange melody repeatedly" (Blyton 9).

As Ecocriticism deals with the relationship of humans and non-humans, these incidents in the story relates to it and it can be pointed out that humans don't know as

much as they think they know about the environment and yet environment knows everything about humans-

“‘We’ll do some more exploring as soon as we can!’ cried Beth. ‘We’ll find out what those whispering trees are saying! We’ll know all the secrets of the wood before many weeks are past!’”(Blyton 7).

“‘I shouldn’t be surprised,’ said the squirrel. ‘The Faraway Tree is King of the Wood, and now that trouble has come to it all the other trees are angry. Perhaps they want to help us’”(Blyton 197).

The beautiful description of nature can steal heart of many readers, especially children. The novel not only encourages eco-critical, magical and spiritual themes but also teaches moral values like friendship, being responsible, understanding, and humble and helping others and how the relationship of humans and the non-humans and their friendship near nature should be without causing any harm to each other. The animals in the enchanted wood were very kind and amiable and of big heart. Whenever the children got into trouble or felt down, they always helped them with the best interest which would definitely melt the hearts of even the adult readers-

“‘But Frannie wept great tears. The two rabbits looked at her, most upset. One put his paws into her hand. ‘I’ll help you,’ he said’”(Blyton 36).

“‘They all sat on the ground, getting their breath and laughing, for it really was funny to shoot down inside a tree on a cushion’”(Blyton 40).

Even though the answers lie in the nature, we humans, often tend to look farther than that. We just need to get closer to nature and the answers are there in the nature-

“‘Put your arms round a tree trunk and press your left ear to the tree,’ said the squirrel suddenly. ‘I have heard it said that that is the only way to hear a tree’s words’” (Blyton 197).

1.2 City vs. Country

Children are very excited and looking forward to learn about flora and fauna of the new place. In city, there are lesser opportunities to meet such diversity of plants and animals but in rural area, that is, in the countryside, they will be able to learn much more about the natural environment. So there is this curiosity in the children already, because of the new environment of the country.

“‘And I shall pick as many flowers as I want to,’ said Beth” (Blyton 1).

The communion of children with nature is seen here. Finally the three kids, Joe, Beth and Frannie will be in the natural environment where they actually belong and this was how they were supposed to be growing up. Children in the city are deprived of even big vegetation.

“‘We might see fairies there!’ said Frannie” (Blyton 1).

There’s magical element also in the kids’ imagination as children are always attracted by these fanciful things. The two kinds of things are meeting right from the beginning, country and fairies, the magical and the divine world. They had the ability to

find magic and divine in everything in their natural environment, which shows a pantheistic mindset of them towards nature. In the city though, the creation of concrete structures, buildings causes this connection of the kids from the natural environment difficult to connect with and relate to. For example, in the city, when the kids are growing up, the vegetables they are eating that is coming from the hard work of the farmers, who sowed the seeds into the soil and harvested the fields during different seasons, it takes a long journey from there to their mouth, but they might think it's coming directly from the grocery or vegetable shops. Even the water they drink, they might have no idea about the water cycle, about the water sources, the rainwater, well water and spring water and the process they go through to reach their taps. All of the packaged food has also a long way to their homes from the seed to harvesting to processing. The kids of city are not aware of these things, but in the country, the kids are aware of these things. So the differences between city and country arise and can also be seen here.

“How lovely it would be to be in the clean country, with flowers growing everywhere, and birds singing in the hedges!” (Blyton 1).

There is the emphasis on clean country, because the city is not that clean. There is the element of pollution in the city in contrast of country, which is clean. No one pollutes the environment in the country. But in the city, there are many ways through which the environment can get polluted, from usage of all kinds of non-biodegradable substances, fuels, multiple times of processing, but in country and village, the waste is more than often biodegradable and organic, that is used as manure in the fields or feeding animals. There

are not much waste products that are non-biodegradable, so there is no problem of environment pollution. Mostly, waste gets used up in organic ways.

“‘We might have adventures in the country,’ said Joe. There will be streams and hillsides, big fields and dark woods, it will be lovely!’” (Blyton 2).

From the very beginning, the anticipation is being built in the children, since it’s a children’s book. The children are looking very excited and already planning so many things ahead of their amazing and fantastical experiences.

“‘I dare say you will find it all very dull’” (Blyton 2).

The children’s father said that they will not find anything amusing and interesting in the new place. The contrast of children and adults can be seen, in their world view. Children have all these big ideas and imagination, but the adults who are used to living in the city, find country side very dull because of their fast-paced and busy life. That is where he was quite wrong about the new place, the woods.

“‘Their cottage was five miles from the station,’” (Blyton 2).

In the city, we usually fancy the idea of living in the cottage in the mountain. We feel a sense of retreat about it. It is a retreat for everyone and for these children in the novel.

“‘Roses hung from the walls- red and white and pink- and honeysuckle was all round the front door. It was lovely!’” (Blyton 2).

Enid Blyton has given a repetitive description of the beauty of the country. Also the children can be seen admiring on continuous basis about joy of living in the country. When children would read Blyton's book, they will also start having this idea that the country is actually very beautiful. They would be able to appreciate the trees, the natural landscape of the country.

“It's rather a mysterious sort of wood,’ said Joe thoughtfully. ‘Don't you think so, Beth?’” (Blyton 4).

““The noise the leaves make is different. Listen!””(Blyton 4).

““It really is magic!’ said Frannie suddenly. I can feel magic about somewhere, can't you, Beth? Can't you, Joe?’” (Blyton 9).

The spiritual and magical elements can be witnessed from the way Joe and Frannie are speaking about the woods. The pantheistical idea is seen. Nature has been personified, where the trees were seen to be whispering secrets in a language we cannot comprehend. This novel is about understanding that language. Their imagination is further stoked when they got to know the name of the wood from their father- the enchanted wood. They become even more curious when their father asked them not to roam around deep into the woods as the curious nature of the children. So they want to establish that communication, unravel those mysteries and participate in this divinity of woods. The feeling that we cannot comprehend through five senses but can intuitively feel its presence, that kind of feeling is the divine and supernatural that Frannie is experiencing, since it is not tangible.

“‘Let’s sit down under that oak tree over there,’ said Joe. ‘It’s all soft moss beneath. It will be like sitting on a green velvet cushion’” (Blyton 10).

“‘Whoever it is that is coming will be frightened if they see us. There’s magic happening here, and we want to see it!’” (Blyton 11).

Through the enchanted wood and the children’s visit in the country, Blyton is introducing the child readers to all kinds of plants and animals and descriptions of the natural landscapes along with divineness being present all around them. There are lots of things they had never seen before even if they had gone to forest. The children are also aware of the nature’s own delicate system and their intervention might make the beings living there frightened, which usually adults do not and want to force their way into everything. Children have this natural instinct to not disturb things but only have curiosity. The three children were also carrying moral values. For example, Joe knew they were hiding but could not resist when he saw a gnome robbing the elves, so he jumped even though it meant getting disclosed and scaring them more. The elves thanked them and introduced them to ‘The Faraway Tree.’ It can be seen from here that children have much more expectations in the country. They are able to explore and meet more kinds of different flora and fauna and even pantheistic elements. The City, on the other hand, is a place of science and logic where people only thinks only in one way whereas country allows us to think in different ways. City does not have space for magic but country has the space for magic also and simplicity ways to think about things like mysteries and wonders of nature. Since the children’s imagination always leans towards magic, supernatural, fantastical elements, child’s mind considers divine in everything present. For example, even before they reached

the country, Frannie said they might see fairies in the countryside. So, the children have a little naïve belief in nature and magic. So, the divine in nature is always being represented in their imagination.

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Chapter 3 -Conclusion

The study is an effort to do an eco-critical analysis of *The Enchanted Wood* and to look at it from children's point of view. I tried to find some themes of eco-criticism and look from children's view throughout in the novel. The study analysis showed lots of nature's descriptions and also children's view of nature.

Since childhood, we must learn to love nature if we want to transform our biocentric worldview (Mishra, Sandeep Kumar 093).

Throughout the novel, the three children and their non-human folk friends were around the lap of nature. They loved to be near nature and ate home-cooked meals and snacks. Joe, Beth and Frannie and their really good non-human friends- MoonFace, Silky and the Old Saucepan Man and others shared lots of adventures and happy memories in the novel through the idea of nature and can be seen very environmentfriendly novel though it has more of fantasy genre to it. In the Chapter 1 entitled "Introduction", an effort has been made to introduce the title briefly with background of the author and her work. The description of the children's literature has also been given. In Chapter 2, various events have been discussed of the novel about nature through the lens of eco-criticism and how nature is shown in the novel but how different it is in the contemporary world but also gives a glimmer of hope to change things. The children are fortunate enough to visit such a tree

that has magic spell on it which grabs the readers, especially children to its own new world of pure greenery, magic and nature. It is found that there are lots of elements for children like-

They all experience different kinds of land and then realize in the end that the best land is where they live, showing the importance of nature. No amount of land of birthdays and land of take-what-you want can replace the nature in which we live. The incidents end with the children fleeing the problematic territory without causing great damage to themselves, as the form of the children's fantasy story requires these episodes to have an official happy ending. However, these misfortunes are caused to the children of Faraway Tree and other folks of the Faraway Tree, whenever their behavior while climbing the land above is rash, careless, and hurrying. The story of the children experiencing the consequences of irresponsible actions is a recurrent one in Blyton's novel. The lesson is taught that they should use nature responsibly, because nature is ultimately beyond their control. Other inhabitants like Elves and rabbits of the magical forest the kids meet on their first visit pay homage to the distant trees and the enchanted wood.

Each life on this planet has its own fundamental worth, and nobody is above anybody else. Every organism will have equal rights as a result of this understanding, preserving the eco-system's balance. Ecocriticism places a strong emphasis on how man's ego-consciousness is eliminated by his eco-consciousness (Mishra, Sandeep Kumar 092).

The lesson they have learned from the inhabitants of the Far Away Tree is not to force change in nature, but to respect it and adapt and integrate it. This is the summarized argument of the research.

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