

Resisting the Apocalypse: Representing the Anthropocene in Indian English Literature

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Abstract:

Since its emergence in the last half of the twentieth century, environmental discourse in connection with the anthropogenic Climate change has always betrayed a steady adherence to the rhetoric of the apocalypse. Apocalyptic rhetoric, as Greg Garrard argues in his book on ecocriticism, polarizes people, engenders paranoia, and produces crisis as much as it responds to it. In literature, this proclivity of Western ecological thought becomes most apparent through the emergence of what Elizabeth Rosen calls neo-apocalyptic narratives that function as a cautionary tale while jettisoning the sense of a new beginning that characterized the traditional stories of the apocalypse. Whereas the spectacle of visual culture has calcified the presence of these narratives in the western genre of Climate fiction, Indian English literature has had far fewer confrontations with the question of the Anthropocene to have a decided shape. Such hope moulds the heart of this paper as it takes a critical eye to investigate the representation of ecological crises in Contemporary Indian English literature with particular attention to the treatment of the apocalypse – as a trope, as rhetoric, and as aesthetic. The paper takes four texts – Arun Joshi's *The City & the River* (1990), Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* (2004), Indra Sinha's *Animal's People* (2007), and Sarnath Banerjee's *All Quiet in Vikaspuri* (2015) as examples of how the apocalypse has surfaced in Indian English literature of ecological crises and attempts to encourage and critique different aspects of that presence to cultivate a literature of the Anthropocene beyond spectacular visions of disaster.

Keywords: Anthropocene, Indian English Literature, Apocalypse, Representation.