

**The *Green Poems* of Gulzar: An Ecocritical Analysis****Dr. Sarita Chanwaria**

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**Article Received:** 29/05/2025**Article Accepted:** 31/05/2025**Published Online:** 02/06/2025**DOI:** 10.47311/IJOES.2025.19.05.713

**Abstract:** Sampooran Singh Kalra better known as Gulzar is a poet, lyricist, script writer and director. He dwells in the hearts of the people for the numerous shades of life and spectrum of feelings that he presented in his work. His wizardry with words has won him accolades. *Green Poems* by the evergreen poet Gulzar is a compendium of poems on nature and ecology. Nature has always enthralled Gulzar and has always been a part of his imagination, be it a poem, or a song or any other form of art, nature finds expression in all his creations. The wonders of nature and the dangers that threaten it have affected the poet deeply. He is pained by the disappearing forests and hills and the changing landscapes. His *Green Poems* translated by Pavan K. Varma is an expression of his unique take on nature. This paper aims to explore and analyze some of the poems from this collection through an ecocritical lens.

**Key Words:** Green Poems, nature, life, environment, river.

**Introduction:** Gulzar's *Green Poems* is the most evocative and stimulating ecology lessons, set in verse. He wraps his thoughts in simple words that touch the hearts of the readers and in turn stimulate their minds. He beautifully captures the essence of nature which appears prosaic and spiritless to modern consumerist generation and arouse their sensibilities using vivid imagery and similes. Gulzar brilliantly portrays the solacing effect of the trees and rivers, mountains and valleys, brooks and dales and the magic of earth. He seems to be in conversation with nature; he hears the murmuring rivers, the howling winds, the roaring clouds and the tumult of waves. He catches the humming of birds, rustling of leaves and whispering of trees and also understands the messages Mother Nature gives to her selfish acquisitive children. In 'Introduction' to his book Gulzar mentions:

The season was changing. But the rustle of the leaves had something more to say, I heard them. What they say was profound,... 'Save the environment and keep the globe green,' they said. I have heard many a leaf-and trees, rivers, mountains and waterfalls. I am relating their stories to people in poems. Hence I decided to call this collection *Green Poems*. (xv)

**Discussion:** Indeed nature in this book speaks through the mouth of the rhymer. The verses in this collection glide imperceptibly from one scene to another, from beauty to rarity to

damage and destruction to magic and fury of nature. Nature has magic for those who listen. Albert Einstein rightly said, “Look deep into nature and then you will understand everything better.” Gulzar’s sensitivity, his poetic expression paint a vivid picture and provide this opportunity to man. Rivers find a prominent place in his poetry. A river reflects music, ethos, wishes, dreams, desires, flow of time and also represents the serenity of nature along with its destructive power. His poem ‘Flowing Water’ captures the beauty of nature and communicates the message to go with the flow, to accept life as it comes. Gulzar writes: “It is the habit of water to flow, to keep flowing/ A river just does not know how to pause! / Bounding across mountain cliffs...” (127). He draws out the marked characteristics of such sources and magnifies them to establish connect with human life for example like a river one should move ahead whatever the situation is. A river embodies persistence as it moves relentlessly carving its own path through mountains, valleys and forests to reach its destination. It teaches us resilience and motivate us to navigate challenges.

Another appealing poem ‘The River’ portrays the ancient grandeur and power of rivers and the old tradition of nature worship.

Sometimes, when a train passes over the bridge  
The flowing river stops momentarily  
With one wish  
Maybe to see once again that girl’s face  
Who had offered flowers and tulsi to him  
For the good husband to find. (3)

The reverence and admiration for rivers is delineated superbly in this eco verse. The idealized image of Mother Nature and the faith of girl who offer flowers and Tulsi leaves to the river to get her wish fulfilled reflect the significance of nature in human life.

Some other river poems in this book like ‘The Aged River-1’, ‘The Aged River-2’ and ‘The Aged River-3’ also highlights the association of rivers and humans. The old rivers are shrinking and gradually drying up. Lack of rainfall and human concern is visibly responsible. “Muttering to himself this aged river keeps flowing on. / His waters within are slowly drying up/ shrunk in size, he looks emaciated...” (119). ‘The Story of a River’ tells about the wish of a river who wants to remain undisturbed for a day, away from human intrusion and tampering. Gulzar writes:

Can it not be  
That someday nothing happens  
Nothing at all  
And I put my back to my bed  
And remain motionless for one evening. (13)

The ‘Burial of a Well’ depicts the story of a natural well. It addresses the impact of human activities on natural resources. This poem is Gulzar’s expression of his ecological concern, rather his disquiet at what man is doing with nature, with natural resources and also

with those man-made resources which are very necessary to maintain the ecological balance. A well is a symbol of culture and holds special significance as a water resource but in present day world wells are substituted by piped water systems resulting in their disuse for humans. But the point of concern is that they are still a source of life and sustenance for birds and other small creatures. During summers wells provide for the needs of birds and animals, their surrounding area helps in maintaining the eco balance. Gulzar pens:

A well was being closed  
Slowly, it was asphyxiating  
Tons of earth had been poured in (65)

The restlessness of the dove is symbolic here against the undoable without even realizing the repercussions.

She used to flutter her wings and have a bath in its waters  
She was worried  
Flying about the peepul tree the whole day  
The dove was deeply restless  
Vexed about why people are burying a living well! (65)

The title of the poem connotes both literal and metaphorical meaning. Literally it means closing or sealing a well when it is no longer in use. Metaphorically it conveys destruction of a natural water resource in absence of proper care and attention. A water well symbolizes life and sustenance, it is a communal resource that fulfills both physical and spiritual needs of human beings.

‘The Abandoned Well’ is another touching verse about a disused and abandoned well. The acquisitive nature of humans and their reckless behavior towards ecosystem is skilfully portrayed by Gulzar.

Now, nothing is left around the well  
Just a jamun tree, a little distance away,  
That no longer fruits.  
A few leaves occasionally grow, only to die  
Even the water in the well has begun to ebb  
The retaining  
walls of the well have crumbled  
Green slime and blackened walls are all that remain  
Nobody comes down the village’s pathway to draw water any more,... (67)

The above quoted lines depict the ungrateful and heedless attitude of humans who abandoned the well in favour of modern piped water system resulting in crumbling walls of the well and ebbing and contamination of water. Wells which were once symbol of abundance and prosperity are of no use today. Their cultural and historical importance has been forgotten by the insensitive and unmindful modern generation. The withering Jamun tree metaphorically connotes decline of environmental health. It represents neglect and

unsustainable resource management. The image of dying tree speaks for environment conservation.

Gulzar's personal and emotional attachment with nature, and the profound impact it has on his writings is marvelous.

Green Poems is also a testament to a poet's abiding concern about what we as human beings are doing to nature. As a poet, Gulzar would arguably rank among the most effective and genuine voices of environmental conservation and of the need to give respect to the natural world. He writes of this world fully conscious of what human ambition and greed are doing to it. (Foreword, xiv)

'I Told the River' is yet another eloquent poem in which Gulzar warn the river against the wrongdoings of man. Man considers himself the lord of all land and this attitude gives way to ownership over natural resources. Despoiling nature for short-term gains affects the ecological health of this beautiful planet. Rivers are the lifelines of human civilization but human attempt to harness them leads to loss of exuberance and spirit of these rivers. Gulzar mentions:

Some wayward season  
Will rip open your waves  
When you reach your destination  
Your fizz will be no more  
And your body dismembered. (111)

Unmindful human interventions to tame rivers and manage river banks potentially harm the ecosystem and habitat conditions. The multiple uses of river water like irrigation, producing hydroelectricity etc. results in shrinking of these life lines which is very harmful for the eco health of this planet. Construction of dams and reservoirs leads to siltation and sedimentation which in turn changes the flow of rivers and reduce their vitality. Through this poem Gulzar express his concern and warns the readers to adopt sustainable management strategies and to balance between human needs and environmental health. He revealed:

Some people will  
Use spades to cut your banks  
They will drag you  
Over stony ground and thorny land  
Catch you in the mountains  
Throw you down from cliffs  
Arrest you in the plains!  
And churn and whip up  
The waters deep inside you. (111)

'Stained Dawn' extends to the 'The Dirty City' expressing grief and pain over pollution. The poet has used a very powerful paradox when he says that 'Larvae die in clean water/And people begin to cough when the air is pure!' (61). What conditions are we living in? We all

need to contemplate as the above lines point out that we all have become accustomed to polluted air and hence we cough when we get the pure air. Man has very brutally played with nature and the next worst step of man is to commercialize the state. We pollute, and then we invent purifiers- for air, for water. We cut the forests and we lament scanty rains, and then engage in research for artificial rain.

Dust and grime makes no difference now  
They can be brushed away easily  
An ordinary cake of soap is enough  
To keep one's clothes and character clean! (61)

These lines of Gulzar reveal the true human character and psyche. Dust and grime are used metaphorically in the sense of evil deeds. Dust makes no difference it could be washed off and so does man not worried about his deeds; he has polluted his life and degraded himself beyond imagination. He believes that outer cleanliness can hide his inner sordidness; a soap cake can wash his character too! The poet warns us through this poem as in what direction we are moving on. Where have we lost all innocence, concerns and our moral duties towards Mother Nature and earth?

'Stained Dawn' is a poem about light pollution. It highlights the disruptive effects of excessive and improper use of artificial outdoor lights causing skyglow. Due to excessive air and light pollution the sky is looking stained. The natural beauty of dawn is eclipsed by smog and artificial lights.

Spotted, this dawn is stained,  
The creases on the sky are visible  
Black- and -white paw-marks all over. (69)

**Conclusion:** The selections from *Green Poems* that feature in the above analysis explore the man-nature relationship, the ethical aspects of man's exploitation of nature, the impending ecological crisis and the need for environmental awareness and sustainable development.

Gulzar's ecological poems leave us pondering and introspecting. Man is very well acquainted with his own acts of devastation and damage but the call of the time is to stop damaging and disturbing the nature and to put in serious efforts to maintain ecological balance. We are forced to live in such conditions which have put the life of man at stake; his health and his well-being are all under serious threat. Until we realize all this and stop playing with nature we cannot but stop the deterioration and ecological collapse.

A poet's concern towards environmental issues and in such a way that it leaves us all astounded and at the same time stimulates to work for a better and greener earth is the greatest contribution anyone can give. When we truly love and admire nature, we not only find beauty around us, we find solace within. If man yields to its magnetism he will definitely move in the right direction. Nature is the endless source of joy and pleasure. It teaches us valuable lessons about perseverance, peace, simplicity patience, pace, harmony, adaptability

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and, resilience and the interconnectedness and interdependence of all living beings. It tunes our life with its musical marvel.

Mahatma Gandhi has very aptly said that, “Earth provides enough to satisfy every man’s needs, but not every man’s greed.” Man has been cruel to nature to fulfill his greed. Nature has enough to keep human beings happy and healthy but what man is doing with nature pains the sensitive hearts. Gulzar too is pained at the present scenario and urges mankind to observe the magic of nature; relish its resources and cherish its beauty and pass this heritage to the coming generations.

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