

Language, Nature and Emotions in *Our Casuarina Tree*: A Stylistics Perspective

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Abstract: *A language can touch many aspects of human life. As a part of our environment, nature is one of the most important aspects associated with the life cycle of humans, ranging from birth, basic survival, societal and mental needs to overall development. Combining language with nature, Ecolinguistics has emerged as a specialized branch which attends to the issues related to the environment. The earlier studies, in general, have shown the challenging aspects of our environment and the role of language in dealing with the same. However, an important aspect which is the positivity of a language for the environment and vice versa, has received less importance. The present study offers a stylistic evaluation under the lights of the Ecolinguistics of a famous poetic work in English by an Indian poet, Toru Dutt. This study analyses *Our Casuarina Tree* to explore its relevance to nature. The linguistic and literary elements analyzed are imagery, symbolism, syntax and rhythm. The study reviews writing styles and their impact on the reader's experience by examining how her stylistic devices improve the poem's aesthetic and semantic qualities and simultaneously show a deep relationship among nature, language and human emotions. The study clarifies the importance of ecolinguistic parameters in comprehending, appreciating, and relating nature with human emotions through language.*

Keywords: Casuarina Tree, Ecolinguistics, Language, Nature and Emotions, Stylistics

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1. Introduction

Ecolinguistics is a subfield of language that studies how language and discourse affect the environment and ecology. Some of the sustainable development goals (2019, United Nations), like Climate Change (G13) and Biodiversity (G14; G15), show concerns over issues related to our environment. Ecolinguistics, a subfield of language, can contribute to and address critical ecological issues. Moreover, there is also a need to develop theories that must see humans as a part of society and the larger ecosystems that life depends on (Stanlaw James, 2020; The International Ecolinguistics Association).

Literature (irrespective of the language) has long been associated with our environment, and the separation of humans and their language and the natural world is almost impossible (Chen, 2016). Furthermore, linguistic analysis can highlight the real stories we live by and crucial issues related to nature and help us keep the quest alive to explore more stories of humans as contributing factors for sustainable development (Stibbe, 2015, p. 183; UN).

In this study, we have selected a piece of literary art in the form of a poem by Toru Dutt, an Indian poet who lived in the nineteenth century. *Our Casuarina Tree* is considered one of her most renowned and well-liked poems. It was initially published after Dutt died in 1881. *Our Casuarina Tree* is a beautiful and sentimental poem about the author's deep relationship with a Casuarina tree that stood in her childhood home garden. The poem delves into subjects such as memory, nature, and the passing of time.

The casuarina tree reflects the poet's special collections and link to her homeland India. It portrayed the tree vividly, with its branches extending like 'giant arms' and its foliage whispering secrets. The tree represents the development of experiences, a relationship to her history poet's sense of desire, and the

sweet-bitter emotions linked with nostalgia. These aspects have been captured in the poem that is, the joyous moments spent beneath the casuarina tree with her siblings playing and enjoying the beauty of nature. She also reflects on the passage of time and the changes that have a good since her childhood, with her siblings scattered away and treating self showing signs of decay. Toru Dutt's lyrical brilliance and ability to express the essence of emotions through her poetry shines through in *Our Casuarina Tree*.

The poem demonstrates nature's ongoing capacity to evoke a sense of connection and emotional resonance, as well as the tragic beauty and melancholy beauty of these recollections.

The cultural relevance, global issues, aesthetic excellence, and understanding of the social structure of the time make Toru Datt's analysis of *Our Casuarina Tree* of the utmost value.

2. Literature Review

The literature analysis reveals that *Our Casuarina Tree* by Toru Dutt has been studied from various stylistic perspectives. Studies have been done on the poem's intertextuality, historical context, cultural significance, imagery, rhythm, metre, language, diction, and literary influences. The richness of the poem's themes and its significance to Indian English literature has been better understood by researchers owing to these varied approaches. For a thorough comprehension of Dutt's classic work, the review serves as a springboard for additional study. It inspires academics to explore new facets of stylistic analysis, such as distinctiveness, voice and signature in the realm of literary composition and the manner in which ideas, thoughts and emotions are conveyed, embodied, expressed, and presented (Quackenbush et al., 2019). All these attributes need to be explored if evident in Toru's poetry.

The study of style in texts is the focus of applied linguistics, known as stylistics. It closely examines the text, analyzing its prominent forms with the purpose of interpretation. (Jaafar, 2014) The goal of most stylistics is not simply to describe the formal features of texts for their own sake but to show their interpretation of the text or to relate literary effects to linguistic causes that are felt to be relevant. Stylistics analysis provides a commentary that is objective and scientific based on concrete, quantifiable data and applied systematically. It makes use of specialized technical expressions and ideas that come from linguistics.

Our Casuarina Tree by Toru Dutt has garnered significant critical attention from multiple perspectives, including postcolonial, feminist, and environmental lenses. From a postcolonial standpoint, the poem reflects a deep yearning for a pre-colonial past and a profound connection to Indian heritage, symbolized by the resilient casuarina tree, as literature is not an independent "text" which can be separated from the environment. But, it is a discourse entirely dependent on the context in which it occurs (Candria, 2019).

Furthermore, environmental criticism explores the poem's portrayal of nature, contrasting nostalgic reminiscences with the stark reality of urbanization and deforestation, thus raising crucial concerns about humanity's responsibility to the environment. By integrating these diverse critical perspectives, the poem offers a multi-faceted exploration of socio-cultural context, gender dynamics, and ecological themes, enriching our comprehension of its profound significance within the broader literary landscape.

Our Casuarina Tree is a superb piece of writing and gives us a taste of what Toru might have done had not the race of her life been so quickly run (Iyengar et al., 1985). The casuarina tree symbolizes motherhood for mammals, ants, bees, birds, etc., for this sacred tree provides shelter to all living things without discriminating their origins, shapes and colours (Alok Chandra, 2021).

It is criticized for being overly analytical because it only breaks down literary works into their component language forms, leaving little opportunity for the reader's interpretation or intuition. Literature would then be viewed as little more than a collection of language devices with no specific aesthetic significance. If the two methodologies stated before are used to investigate the style of literary works, this is not

necessarily the case. This means that literature is not viewed as a standalone piece that can exist independently of its context but rather as a discourse composed of two key components: the literary text and the socio-cultural setting in which it was created.

However, so far, no study could solely have studied the ecological aspects presented in the poem and the link between nature and human emotions, which are aptly articulated through the language. Hence, there is a need to explore how this poem can reveal humans' contribution to the environment and vice versa.

3. Methodology

The language, structure, and literary devices of the poem *Our Casuarina Tree* are carefully examined in this research study using a close reading methodology to analyze its stylistic elements. Finding patterns, recurrent themes and stylistic decisions the poet makes are the core part of this study. The study provides a robust framework for understanding and examining the poem, using well-established ideas and frameworks of stylistic analysis - with a clear focus on nature at the centre.

4. Stylistic Analysis

This analysis delves into the rich layers of the poem, examining its themes, poetic techniques, and the historical context in which it was written. By unravelling the complexities of *Our Casuarina Tree*, we gain a deeper understanding of Dutt's artistry and the lasting significance of her work. Dutta has very extensively used phonological features in poetry. Phonology is the analytical study of speech, sound patterns, psychological effects, and acoustic qualities. Rhyming scheme, assonance, alliteration, and repetition are some of the phonological features/aspects employed in writing by Dutt in her poetry. The rhyming scheme is the repetition of similar sounds in a pattern, a typical feature of poetry writing that deviates from the prose writing style. It creates a memorable effect on the readers, assisting in arousing emotions and enhancing the formality and musicality of the work. The poem consists of five stanzas with eleven lines in each stanza.

Stanzas, in the poem: Our Casuarina Tree	Rhyme Scheme
Stanza: One	ABBACDDCEEE
Stanza: Two	FGGFHIIHJJ
Stanza: Three	KLLKMNNMOOO
Stanza: Four	PQQPRSSRTTT
Stanza: Five	UUVVUWXXWYYY

Each stanza is composed of octaves containing two enclosed rhyme quatrains closing with a rhyming tercet. The ending with tercet instead of couplet as traditionally done gives the impression of overflowing feelings. The concept has been used appropriately to highlight the theme of nostalgia and longing. Alliteration is the occurrence of the same sound in words which are written closely. The alliteration used in this poem is *creeper climbs* (/k/sound), *crimson cluster* (/k/ sound), *sweet song* (/s/ sound), *spring-like snow* (/s/ sound) and *loved with love* (/l/ sound). This creates musical and trans effects on the readers with pleasant tunes, which makes the poem memorable.

Stanza I

*LIKE a huge Python, winding round and round
The rugged trunk, indented deep with scars,
Up to its very summit near the stars,
A creeper climbs, in whose embraces bound
No other tree could live. But gallantly
The giant wears the scarf, and flowers are hung*

*In crimson clusters all the boughs among,
Whereon all day are gathered bird and bee;
And oft at nights the garden overflows
With one sweet song that seems to have no close,
Sung darkling from our tree, while men repose.*

With the poem's opening, we are transported to the poet's childhood home, to the place where the majestic casuarina tree has existed for as long as the poet can remember. With excellent literary talent, she has painted very richly detailed imagery of it.

The poem starts dramatically with the *simile* where the creeper tightly winding around the tree is compared with the python. It has left deep scars like marks on the tree's trunk, but it still stands proudly, drawing the reader's attention to its strength and endurance.

The Poet has given rich *imagery* details describing the tree and its surrounding place. The scars on the tree's trunk tell the tale of its survival and might be the marks left with time, like the impact of memories on the poet. The creeper tightly holds onto the tree, revealing its tenacious nature. The crimson flower cluster on the tree branches evokes a vibrant, colourful image. The presence of birds and bees with tranquil sweet songs at night attributes to the atmosphere of the garden, making one feel closer to nature.

The use of *alliteration* adds to the musicality of the work, the *rugged trunk* repetition of the /r/ sound and the *crimson cluster* repetition of the /k/ sound. In the line *Like a huge python, winding round and round*, the poet uses *repetition* to emphasize the tight winding of the creeper around the tree. Poet has *personified* the tree as a giant and creeper as it embraces the tree.

With the use of *hyperbole*, the tree's height is exaggerated; it grew so tall that it almost reached the stars. The tree is metaphorically compared with the gallant heroic imagery of surviving.

The stanza consists of *compound* and *complex sentences* with a detailed description of the tree and its surrounding.

Stanza II

*When first my casement is wide open thrown
At dawn, my eyes delighted on it rest;
Sometimes, and most in winter,—on its crest
A gray baboon sits statue-like alone
Watching the sunrise; while on lower boughs
His puny offspring leap about and play;
And far and near kokilas hail the day;
And to their pastures wend our sleepy cows;
And in the shadow, on the broad tank cast
By that hoar tree, so beautiful and vast,
The water-lilies spring, like snow enmassed.*

In the second stanza, readers are shown the beautiful morning scenery of the tree's surrounding from the poet's room window. The stanza starts with the image of the poet's eyes resting on the scene outside her home through a casement early in the morning. The sun is rising, and the gray Baboon is sitting still like a

statue; the use of simile as the stillness of the baboon is compared with lifeless objects. The depiction of Baboon's playful offspring playing on the tree branches and Kokila's welcoming day with their sweet voice is given. The sleepy cows are on their way to pasture, and water lilies blooming like (simile) snow enmassed in the tank covered in the shadow of a hoar tree creates a vivid image. By the word hoar, the poet highlights the tree's wisdom, which comes with decades of experience. Words such as casement, wide thrown open, delighted, gray baboon, statue-like, broad tank, hoar tree, and so beautiful and vast add vivid details to the imagery. The inclusion of the baboon and Kokilas, along with cows, gives the Indian context to the poem.

In lines 8-10, the parallelism of the word and at the beginning can be seen rhythmically, emphasizing the different actions simultaneously. The stanza also has alliteration and spring like snow enmassed repetition of the sound /s/. The poet has used inversion for the sentence structure of the first two, and last two lines of the stanza, as well simple, compound and complex sentence structure can be seen to describe different actions and scenes observed. This stanza also symbolizes the poet's impression of her surroundings in early life when everything was delightful with a simple life.

Stanza III

But not because of its magnificence

Dear is the Casuarina to my soul:

Beneath it, we have played; though years may roll,

O sweet companions, loved with love intense,

For your sakes, shall the tree be ever dear.

Blent with your images, it shall arise

In memory, till the hot tears blind mine eyes!

What is that dirge-like murmur that I hear

Like the sea breaking on a shingle-beach?

It is the tree's lament, an eerie speech,

That haply to the unknown land may reach.

In the preceding two stanzas, the poet has described the memorizing *imagery* of the tree and its surrounding. The poem's mood changes from *descriptive* to *reflective in the third stanza*. She has conveyed her unfathomable longing for her loved one and abounded grief for losing them through it. The poet recalls the sweet memories of playing happily beneath the tree in childhood with her older siblings, sister *Aru* and brother *Abju*, who passed away at a young age. She *alludes* to them in the poem and has addressed (*apostrophes*) them in the stanza. The poet's affection and love for the tree is due to its being part of her sweet memories with her siblings, and now only she and the tree are left behind who share the grief, nostalgia and mourning, which make her eyes turn blind with hot tears. She has *personified the casuarina tree*, which, according to her, is lamenting like her, which she can feel by the *eerie* sound coming from the tree. For her, the murmur of the tree sounds akin to dirge (*metaphor*), as she has used a *simile*. The murmur is like the sound of the sea breaking on a shingle beach. She *retorically* questioned the sound of the tree to make the reader contemplate the mysterious and hunting impression it gives. The poet considers this sound an elegy by the tree to her siblings who are no more with them and hopes that the song may reach *to the unknown land (metaphor)* where they now reside, suggesting a link to something beyond the mortal world.

The repetition of the word *dear* for the tree in the lines *dear is the casuarina to my soul* (2) and *for your sakes, shall the tree be ever dear* (5) emphasizes the importance and significance of the tree in the poet's life. The poet has used a combination of *complex, simple and complex sentences* to explore different thoughts and emotions in a natural flow.

Stanza IV

Unknown, yet well-known to the eye of faith!

Ah, I have heard that wail far, far away

In distant lands, by many a sheltered bay,

When slumbered in his cave the water-wraith

And the waves gently kissed the classic shore

Of France or Italy, beneath the moon,

When earth lay tranced in a dreamless swoon:

And every time the music rose,—before

Mine inner vision rose a form sublime,

Thy form, O Tree, as in my happy prime

I saw thee, in my own loved native clime.

Here we see that the tree's existence is more than its physical appearance to the poet. Even in the distant land of France and Italy, she can still hear the tree's lamenting cry as they are spiritually connected. Words like *unknown, well-known, tranced, dreamless swoon, music, form sublime, happy prime, and loved native clime* evoke a sense of nostalgia, wonder and enchantment as well as create the impression of mystery. The *juxtaposition* of the *unknown* with *well-known* words gives the impression that faith can see beyond what is here and not. Through the same deep faith, she can feel her siblings' presence. She has *alluded* to *distant land, sheltered bay* and *classic shores of France and Italy*, creating romantic settings. The poet has also recalled the tree's image from the happiest period in life in her *loved native clime*. She has vividly depicted the *imagery* of scenes of slumbering water wraiths, waves gently kissing the classic shores of France and Italy, a tranced earth beneath the moon and the speaker's sublime inner visions, which delivered the expression of eternity within nature. This stanza gives us the impression of the significance of the casuarina that, in her mind, its form is *sublime*, crossing the boundary of the physical realm. The stanza contains a combination of *complex* and *compound sentences*.

Stanza V

Therefore I fain would consecrate a lay

Unto thy honor, Tree, beloved of those

Who now in blessed sleep for aye repose,—

Dearer than life to me, alas, were they!

Mayst thou be numbered when my days are done

With deathless trees—like those in Borrowdale,

Under whose awful branches lingered pale

“Fear, trembling Hope, and Death, the skeleton,

And Time the shadow;” and though weak the verse

That would thy beauty fain, oh, fain rehearse,

May Love defend thee from Oblivion's curse.

In this poem's final stanza, the poet declares immortality to the casuarina tree with delight, for it is the beloved of her and her siblings who are now sleeping in an eternal world, which means they have passed away. She has *alluded* to the Borrowdale tree from *Wordsworth's poem Yew Trees* and hopes her beloved Casuarina will live forever like those deathless trees. In the end, she repeats with delight that she hopes her love may defend (*personification*) the tree from oblivion's curse with this poem, and it will not even be forgotten.

5. Findings and Discussion

Language and Imagery are salient features of Toru Datt's poetry. Dutt uses vivid pictures to give the reader a sensory experience. Using descriptive language, she invokes the casuarina tree's and its surroundings' natural beauty. She conjures a vision of *the giant on the river-side* and its boughs being hung with nests of birds that never stop singing, for instance. The poem is rich in its symbolism. In the poem, the casuarina tree is a potent symbol. It stands for tenacity, power, and steadiness. The tree is a metaphor for the poet's life and the memories surrounding it.

The metaphor of the *old tree* alludes to the tenacity of the past and the significance of history. Poet keenly uses a unique structure and form. The poem *Our Casuarina Tree* has six stanzas with four lines each (quatrain). The structure's consistency creates a sense of rhythm and harmony. The regular metre and rhyme scheme enhances the poem's musicality and lyrical beauty (ABCB). The use of figures of speech is very compatible with the meaning of poetry.

Dutt humanizes the casuarina tree by giving it human traits and feelings. She mentions the tree's *arms, tresses, and thousand bright green leaves*, for instance. By personifying the tree, the author strengthens the reader's bond with it and gives it a sense of life. This humanization is a perfect example of personification. The poet uses contrast in the poem as it contrasts nature's tranquilly beauty with the fleeting nature of human life.

Dutt compares the tree's enduring character and people's transitory life. She highlights that, despite people coming and going, the tree endures as a stoic observer of the passing of time. One more feature to notice is the use of allusion. In the poem, Dutt alludes to Greek mythology, citing *Bacchus*, the deity of alcohol and revelry. Through this allusion, the poem gains depth and cultural complexity which connects time, nature, and old myths. The poem *Our Casuarina Tree* makes everyone feel downcast and nostalgic. Dutt considers the past, her early years, and the passing of time. The poem's tone is melancholy as the author pines for the return of those carefree times and considers how short life is. Toru Dutt successfully portrays a strong sense of the enduring power of nature and the fleeting nature of human existence through the aesthetic elements used in *Our Casuarina Tree*. The poem's expressive language, vivid imagery, and capacity to connect with readers emotionally and intellectually make it so beautiful.

Regarding how they are shown and what they mean symbolically, the yew tree in Borrowdale Valley by Wordsworth and the Casuarina Tree in Toru Dutt's poem *Our Casuarina Tree* can be compared and contrasted here.

The Borrowdale Valley yew tree represents the timeless and enduring nature of the natural world in Wordsworth's poems. It connects to the areas' historical and cultural heritage and symbolizes the ties that bind the present and coming generations. On the other hand, the casuarina tree in Dutt's poem stands in for several concepts, such as the power of nature, yearning, and the cycle of life and death. It serves as a vehicle for the poet's emotions and ideas while expressing her love for her native land.

Borrowdale Valley's yew tree is located in Borrowdale Valley, a different geographic place in England's Lake District. It is a natural terrain feature firmly engrained in the history and culture of the region; in contrast, the Casio Reena tree is depicted in a broader, more attractive Framework. It is described as enigmatic; all in a compassing presence that envelops the environment, it requires the yew tree's specific geography and cultural foundation.

In both poems, rich imagery brings the trees to life. The yew tree is described in Wordsworth's poem as *black* and *solemn*, with *strange*, *wild forms* and *knotted and twisted branches*. This piece of art inspires feelings of mystique, strength, and infinity.

In Dutt's poetry, the casuarina tree is likened to a *huge Python* and its branches are compared to *thin woven silver*. The vibrant imagery underlines the tree's strength and delicate beauty, giving the reader a visual and sensory experience.

In England, yew trees from the Borrowdale Valley have a rich cultural heritage. Old folklore, religious symbolism, and deeply rooted regional customs influence it. On the other hand, the casuarina tree represents Dutt's experiences as an Indian author who lived through colonial times in his poems. It expresses her quest for a connection to her cultural background and her home country.

Both trees represent nature's persistence and flexibility but elicit distinct emotions. Yew trees represent endurance, a connection to the past, and the round aspect of existence. It connects past, current, and future generations. The casuarina tree, on the other hand, addresses themes of longing, nostalgia, and the fleeting aspect of human existence. It expresses the poet's emotional and cultural longing for her own country.

6. Conclusion

The analysis-based article provides insights into Dutt's unique writing style and its impact on the reader by carefully examining the poem's linguistic and stylistic components. The ideology that is revealed in the text is (1) nature as a central theme through the detailed description of nature and integration of it with human experience, (2) human nature interconnectedness, (3) language and nature through the investigation of imagery, symbolism, syntax, and rhythm and poetic technique of the poet (4) culture and ecological identity symbolized through casuarina tree. Through the poem's stylistic analysis, we can draw a broader understanding of the poem's themes, language use, cultural implications and the emphasized connection between nature and human experience. This article contributes to the greeting field of academic studies by emphasizing the importance of stylistic analysis and invites further stylistic examination of Dutt's work.

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