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ECOLOGICAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN THE SELECTED POEMS OF INDIAN AND WESTERN POETS

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Abstract

Ecocriticism is the new branch of literature which deals with environment and literature in different perspectives. The true lovers of nature critically evaluate and exemplify the environmental issues. It is a kind of new platform to explore and protect the environment through writings. Actually, ecocritical movement started in the USA in late 19th century and slowly spread across the world. The writers of English also took part for the protection of nature by exposing the repercussions from deforestation through their precious writings. Indian poets such as Gieve Patel, Dilip Chitre and Nikhil Sharma and western poets such as Adrian Flett, Charlotte Mew and George Woodcock are part of this phase. All of these poets have taken a great care and concern towards the environment and expressed their feelings over the tendency of humans with regard to deforestation. Their poems are highly motivational and realization to the people not to damage or destroy the vegetation on this planet and it's an advice to stop the future pandemics also. Hence, ecological balance has become the recurrent issue of the present time in the entire universe. The present research article aims at analyzing critically about destroying the vegetation is equal to killing a human.

1. Introduction

Ecocriticism refers to the interaction between literature and the natural world. The American Association for the Study of Literature and Environment (ASLE) is frequently linked to it. The term "Ecocriticism" denotes a broad approach and is also referred to as "Green (Cultural) Studies," "Ecopoetics," "Environmental Literary Criticism," and "Social Ecology." In the mid 1980's onwards ecocriticism has been emerged as a genre of literature.

A contemporary idea for literary and cultural experts to study the global ecological problem via literature, culture, and the physical world is ecocriticism. Additionally, it is referred to as a concept known as "Literary Ecology" (Mecker 1972); subsequently, it was called "ecocriticism" (Ruckert 1996). Multidisciplinary work is fundamental to ecocriticism. It can be used with pieces where the landscape is the primary character or if there is a strong relationship between the writer and the setting, or the role and the setting. Eco critics raise many questions on the relationship between environment and literature but are seem to be the most significant. Literary criticism offers an ecological interpretation of texts.

Poets were influenced to produce a literature which was fully meant for the native land. The western writers like Irving, Edgar Allan Poe, Shakespeare and Wordsworth and Indian writers such as Toru Dutt, Krishna Gokak, Gieve Patel, Tagore, and Sarojini Naidu and the post-colonial writers like Wole Soyinka, Judith Wright, etc, all interpreted about their own natural landscape and environment in their works.

2. A Review of Related Literature:

The ecocritics say that anthropocentrism should be replaced by ecocentrism. The conventional dichotomies, such as man/nature or culture/nature, are likewise rejected by them. Numerous ecocritics advocate for the "green reading" movement to be expanded. While primordial faiths like Buddhism and Hinduism portray the natural world as a living, holy entity with whom man coexists in harmony, western religions provide humans an undeniable supremacy over the physical environment. The ecocritics, therefore, show an interest in the primitive religions and cultures. Abrams and Harpham have nicely pointed out:

“Some radical environmental critics maintain that the ecological crisis can be resolved only by the rejection, in the West, of the Judeo Christian religion and culture, with its anthropocentric view that human beings because they possess souls transcend nature, and are inherently masters of the non-human world, and by adopting instead an ecocentric religion which promulgates the sacredness of nature and a reverence for all forms of life as intrinsically equivalent”

Another important aspect of ecocriticism is the exploration of the relationship between nature and culture. The idea that everything is socially or linguistically produced is rejected by ecocriticism, in contrast to the majority of other views. In this connection, one may remember the observation made by Peter Barry:

“For the ecocritic, nature really exists, out there beyond ourselves, and not

needing to be ironised as a concept by enclosure within knowing inverted commas, but actually present as an entity which affects us and which we can affect, perhaps fatally, if we mistreat it. Nature, then, isn't reducible to a concept which we conceive as part of our cultural practice (as we might conceive a deity, for instance, and project it out onto the universe). Theory in general tends to see our external world as socially and linguistically constructed, as 'always already textualized into 'discourse', but ecocriticism calls this longstanding theoretical orthodoxy into question ..."

3. Ecocritical Concerns of Gieve Patel in the Poem "On Killing a Tree"

Gieve Patel is an Indian Poet, Playwright, Painter, as well as a physician. He is one of the poets who belong to the "Green Movement". It advocates the protection of environment. Patel's poems narrate about the deep concerns towards nature and expose man's cruelty towards the nature. Gieve Patel has shown his ecocritical approach in one of his famous poems entitled "on Killing a Tree". This poem represents the man's cruelty towards the tree. He guides us through the process of killing a tree step-by-step while showing us that doing so is equivalent to killing a human being with empathy and care. It also alludes to the indestructibility of nature and the destructive character of humanity.

Redirecting human consciousness to fully appreciate its place in an imperiled natural environment is literature's most important contribution. Many writers have raised their voice over the increasing pollution and destruction of the ecosystem through their works. The present research article attempts to analyze the ecocritical approach of Gieve Patel with reference to his poem "On Killing a Tree".

The modern world and the quickening pace of deforestation brought about by urbanization and industry serve as the poem's settings. The killing of the tree is the setting of the poem. "Earth is all that we have in common". It is a simple principle which is forgotten by the people. Consciously or unconsciously humans pave path for the destruction of the earth. Killing a tree is a simple act but when it is done in a macroscopic level, it is a great destructive to nature. The poet emphasized this thought throughout his poem. Although Patel states at the beginning of the poem that it is not an easy task to destroy a tree, he says:

*It takes much time to kill a tree,
Not a simple jab of the knife
Will do it.*

He clarifies that pruning a tree involves more than just chopping off its limbs or stem. The leaves and branches regrow. To destroy or kill it, we must remove the root and allow it to dry in the sun. Patel claims that killing a tree takes too long. The tree cannot be killed by a short, sharp blow, stab, or little jab. The tree grows like a child does, slowly eating the dirt and emerging from it after absorbing years of sunlight, air, and water through its leprous hide, which allows the tree's bark to start sprouting. He explains the regenerative power of nature in the following lines of the poem.

*It has grown
Slowly consuming the earth,
Rising out of it, feeding
Upon its crust, absorbing
Years of sunlight, air, water,
And out of its leprous hide
Sprouting leaves.*

The tree does not experience any pain because its bleeding bark always appears to recover.

The author also attempts to trace the consciousness into the reader's presence of mind and indirectly guides to behave rightly as a corrective mirror in which members of the society for the positive change in order to save the nature and also themselves else there will be a pain to have. However, man does not want it to come back to life because of his avarice. He digs a large hole in the ground and retrieves the tree's roots, which are its source of life and spirit and have been preserved there for many years.

*The root is pulled out-
Out of the
For years inside the earth.*

Ultimately, the tree is killed and reduced to dead lumber after a great deal of browning, hardening, twisting, and withering. The most important portion of the tree, whatever has been concealed beneath the earth for a long time will come to light from every source where it is moist and white. Following that, sun drying, choking, scorching, and burning to induce damage or discoloration are all that are required. Eventually, the tree will twist, become harder, become brown, and eventually wither. This ultimately results in the tree's death.

Here the poet shows all his concerns about the nature not urging the human population to destroy the nature to stop future pandemics. His tone is very sarcastic to make the people realized and portrays his humanistic concern towards the nature.

4. Dilip Chitre's Mythological Significance of Trees in 'The Felling of a Banyan Tree':

Dilip Chitre, a wellknown and gifted artist and filmmaker. He is considered to be among the most popular modern poets in India. In addition to Marathi, he has written in English. His 1980 book "Travelling in a Cage" contained the first edition of "The Felling of the Banyan Tree." The poet asserts that it is a crime to damage a tree in this poem. He also concentrates on the several trees that his father has designated as "massacred." The banyan, a large tree with deep roots, is a symbol of ages of existence that bind the ground to the sky. This is also removed. Dictated by dozens of men because it cannot resist. A whole ecology gradually collapses and disappears. The 'felling' foretells the future ecological imbalances globally. In the name of globalization, building houses, industries, population explosion, the wilderness is happening.

*Trees are sacred my grandmother used to say
Felling them is a crime but he massacred them all*

The speaker expresses two emotions in this poem: interest and horror. The first is motivated by melancholy and anxiety about the future, while the second is inspired by the image of a big tree falling to the ground. The tree-banyan, or Batbriksha, has religious importance. It is said to represent the Triumvirate (trimurthulu) of Lord Shiva (the branches), Lord Bramha (the roots), and Lord Vishnu (the bark). This tree is a source of fertility and vitality.

*The great tree revealed its rings of two hundred years
We watched in terror and fascination this slaughter
As a raw mythology revealed to us its age
..... for the ground to strike.*

5. Nikhil Sharma's Felling of a Tree When being Cut:

Nikhil Sharma is an Indian author, sports analyst, and sports administration specialist. He and Shantanu Gupta co-authored the book "India's Football Dream." He wrote many poems among them 'Felling of a Tree When being Cut' is an elegiacal in form and heart-touching poem with a great message to human beings. The beginning lines of the poem expresses the cruel mentality of humans towards the trees.

*In this thankless world stood a caring tree
Giving shelter to this world selfless as you see
But man found it worthless, said it is wasting a piece of land
And thus it should be cut down.....*

The tree expresses that human beings are thankless on the world even though it is selfless towards them. Humans treat the tree as a waste which spreads on the piece of land. They decided to cut the trees with an axe to save their piece of land. With the first stroke the tree cries and recollects all its sacrifices made for the humans earlier. At the time of cutting a tree, it sheds a tear which falls on the hand of a wood cutter. Then wood cutter asked the tree and got replied that the tree has been standing there all the years silently without desires and demands. It also gave shade from sunlight even it did not expect water from humans. It protected everyone with care and gave many fruits for which all smiled while getting them. Sometimes, people throw stones, shared their emotions under the tree which are kept secretly by the tree. Trees cleared the pollution made by humans and brought rains for which trees did not expect any thanks from humans. Now, people kill the trees and value the worth of them. Finally, the tree says that humans are happy by cutting the tree into small pieces and pricing them without mercy. Thankless man cannot know the value of a tree.

*Today you are going to kill me and asking my worth?
Be happy and use my every piece of wood
Which I know you would
But never ask a tree of its worth*

*Because one on this earth
Is with might of that kind
Who can tell a tree's worth to this thankless mankind.*

6. Charlotte Mew's The Trees are Down:

Charlotte Mew is a British author Charlotte Mew is well-known for her poetry and stories that explore themes of mental illness, mortality, loneliness, and disillusionment. With the 1912 publication of her poem "The Farmer's Bride" in the "Nation," she rose to literary prominence. She has also profound consciousness towards the nature which was evident in one of her poems 'The Trees are Down'. It is written in a tone of ecological elegy. This poem might be considered to eco-poetics. The unique feature of this poem is 'conversational and rhythmical'. Written in the 1920s, it was inspired by witnessing laborers fell plane trees in London's Euston Square Gardens. Environmental consciousness is common throughout the poem as well as complexities of humankind's relationship with nature.

-and he cried with a loud voice:

Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees-

The poem begins with a lovely passage from the Book of Revelation in the Holy Bible, where a voice commands us not to harm the land, the water, or the trees. Further it speaks about the humankind's destruction of nature and the connectedness of all living things. The poet was very much against the cutting of trees and felt such act as offensive. She expressed that trees are living beings but they have been cut down. It is felt as cruelty. The heartless attitude of men and insensitivity for the dying of trees are highlighted. The poet speaks about the beauty of the seasons especially the spring, season of full bloom. She encounters with a 'large dead rat' which is unexpected in this season.

*Alive or dead, a rat was a god-forsaken thing,
But at least, in May, that even a rat should be alive*

Mew would like to suggest that a dead rat should have had a springtime rebirth. It occurred as a result of the massive trees that provide shade, a home, and clean air for all living things, including humans. In general, people do not treat other living beings with the same consideration and generosity. As a result, the relationship between people and the environment is nowhere close to being ideal. Out of passion, Mew expressed her grief that all life should be given the chance to live and flourish and strongly recommends that trees are deserved to live.

According to Mew, tree is a symbol of the Spring. She also emphasizes that Spring was not unmade. Moreover, Spring is "in them from not to stem". So Spring is a part of trees. The poet gets upset with the workers who are killing the trees with 'whoops' and 'whoas'. The

following lines express that part of Spring died because of this unkind nature of human beings.

*When the men with the 'whoops' and 'whoas' have created the whole of the whispering
loveliness away
Half the Spring, for me, will have gone with them.*

Mew concludes the poem with the biblical references of 'not hurting the trees'. she wants to bring her readers full circle to show them that nothing truly ends everything has a cycle and continues to exist.

*The small creeping creatures in the earth where they were lying
'Hurt not the trees'.*

7. Adrian Flett's Felling a Tree:

Adrian Flett, is a US poet, and self-employed in Accounting and Task managed branches of banks in US. He has written many short stories, poems and three novels. Above all, he has an environmental consciousness that he expressed in one of his poems 'Felling a Tree', popularly followed by many of the readers and received acclaimed comments.

The opening lines of the poem gives a caution to humans that think before felling a tree. The poet urges us to keep the trees undisturbed that maintains ecological balance on this planet.

*Think before you fell a tree,
think again and let it be.*

The secret zone that is the soil is where trees receive their power and vitality. A tree's lengthy life and extensive roots in the ground make it a challenging undertaking to fell. It also gains beauty and vitality during the spring. It is exposed to all the cycles of season and gets strength at root level and branch. Felling a tree is an inhuman act with this all the memories of it will fade away.

*Too late now to claim,
or respond to Spring's surge.*

*Winter's filtered sun, Summer's shade,
space empty now, gone years of history.
Memories over time will fade
leave only tree's mystery.*

8. Conclusion

Even though there are many poems in Indian Wiring in English, this poem clearly deals with the nature where the poet urges importance of trees in the present world. As a doctor and lover of nature, Gieve Patel cautioned us to protect the nature and ecology for the betterment of all the living creatures in the world and also for the stimulation of our future generation through his poem. He narrates the cruelty of a human in killing the tree with ironical tone and the same way

he conveys a message that trees are most essential and integral part of our life, and so we should not cut them. Thus, he expressed sympathy about the trees and nature in general as they are being destroyed day-by-day by selfish humans. His efforts about protecting the trees are highly applaudable. He protested against the violence and ecological terrorism on nature by humans.

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