



Ecological Sensitivity in Literature

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Abstract:

Literature can be studied by various ways. The study of literature has a large bearing on the ecological issues. Study of literature has drastically been changed by a set of theoretical approaches known as literary theory. The study of literature has been found in a maze of literary theories. The paper attempts to establish that literary theory is not a single enterprise but a set of related concepts and practices.

Keywords: *literary theory, eco-criticism, environmental equilibrium*

Introduction

Literary theory, in general, encompasses several schools of criticism. Each school of criticism has its own uniqueness. To figure out few, Deconstruction, Post-Modernism, Psycho-analytical criticism, Feminist criticism, Marxist Criticism, New Historicism, Cultural Materialism, Queer Theory, Post- Feminist Criticism, Critical Race theories, Eco-criticism, Gyno Criticism and Techno criticism are considered to be the schools of criticism. There is a school of thought that says literary theory is one of the ways of interpreting literature. When a paradigm shift takes place in the late 1960s, literary stalwarts plant the seed of doubt in their minds about literary theory. Interestingly enough, it became part

of the English academic world everywhere in the 1980s. Strictly speaking, literary theory can help us to broaden our horizon and get deeper understanding of literary works. It is interesting to note that literary theory instigates the basic principles and meaning of the artifice provided by the author and reader. It includes the cultural and traditional background of the author where he belongs to.

Eco criticism is a concept which speaks for the voiceless earth. It has gained considerable currency in the last two decades. It draws the attention of academics, intellectuals, and writers. It deals with areas pertaining to ecology in literature. Since it takes an earth-centered approach to literary studies, it appeals to people to live in harmony with nature. The strength of Ecocriticism is the impressive framework which explores various facets like eco feminism, eco poetics and eco justice. It studiously studies the relationship between literature and environment. Cheryll Glotfelty, Scott Slovic, Lawrence Buell, CA Cranstan, Lawrence Coupe, Nirmal Selvamony and Suresh Fredrick sow the seeds of eco criticism in a swift manner.

It is safe to say that nature, like God, is Ubiquitous. It has its own beauty and uniqueness. It is the manifestation of God. Through the beautiful objects of nature, god teaches us. And it is a perennial source of creation for so many writers to show their creative acumen in the form of writings.

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England produced so many writers who have an infinite capacity to penetrate deep emotions and philosophical insights in the dynamics of their writings. Romanticism is a case in point. The term romantic has been defined by various writers. Walter peter calls it the addition of strangeness to beauty, Wats Dunctan defines it as “the renaissance of wonder.” Romantic school of poetry emphasized the self-propelled creativity, imagination and value of art. Imagination is a watchword of romanticism. The Romantic period came after the French revolution. The French revolution attached prime importance to three doctrines—liberty, Equality, Fraternity. Imbued by these revolutionary ideals, romantics attempted to transform the act of writing. William Wordsworth was increasingly influenced by the events of the French revolution in his youth. He deliberately broke away from the artificial diction of the Augustan and Neo-classical tradition. The French revolution affects him very much and left an indelible impression. His interest waned primarily because of the rise of Napoleon. There is no gainsaying the fact that he became spokesman for the common man owing to the perennial impact of the French revolution.

Taking a cue from Elizabethan age, romantic poets started showing their caliber in the form of writings. William words worth, S.T. Coleridge, P.B. Shelley, and John Keats developed a consuming interest in presenting the various facets of nature. They make an attempt to go beyond reason and intellect. Paul de Man mentions in “Intentional structure of the Romantic Image” says the theme of imagination is closely linked with the theme of nature. Nature, individual, Mysticism, imagination, and love of nature are the main dimensions of romantic age. The French revolution brings out a sea

change in the outlook of people. While it is true that words worth builds his poems on nature, Coleridge builds his poems on supernatural. Romantic poetry was basically subjective. It is to be noted that romantic poets strongly believed that one has to fly on the flightless wings of poesy in order to be able to write good poetry. In romantic poetry, there was a psychological curiosity. Wordsworth has a vision which is culminated in the metaphor of nature. As a visionary romantic, he religiously admires the beautiful objects of nature. Unlike society, he does not see nature as commodity.

The world is too much with us is one of the finest sonnets of words worth. It is rather a simple poem which is expressed with a tone of remorse and anger towards the world’s state of material inclination. The poem begins with a negative tone.

The world is too much with us: late and soon,
Getting and Spending, we lay waste our powers:-
Little we see in nature that is ours:
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!

In this sonnet, he comes down heavily on the attitude of people. He also understands that people focus on earning money and spending money. They failed to appreciate the beautiful objects of nature. He laments the fact that we lost our ability to feel as we have given our hearts away He vehemently criticizes the attitude of people who are destroying themselves with consumerism. He thinks our meddling intellect would destroy the pristine glory of nature. People are gradually turned away from god and spirituality in general. More and More people are so absorbed in consumerism in other world. People think everything from utilitarian point of view. He condemns the excessive interest of



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people in money. He rues the fact that money rules and governs us. He has a feeling that people are insensitive to the vastness of nature. Moreover, materialism takes away from achieving the sense of harmony from nature.. He says that being a pagan is better than anything in this life. As a pagan, the poet would have the opportunity of witnessing the sights of pagan gods like Proteus .He steadfastly believes that man is unable to live in harmony with nature.

In the new millennium, we live in a cut- throat competitive world where our environmental equilibrium is in great peril today owing to human activities. On the one hand, our environment is unequivocally polluted. On the other hand, we, by and large, downplay the importance of preserving nature. In hindsight, we suffer a lot. We may suffer in future too. Therefore, concern for ecology is the focus of our attention today. In a less abstract way, Animals, plants and all human beings are the co-inhabitants of the biosphere. There seems to be a pressing need for protecting nature for the welfare of next generation. It is high time that human beings realized the importance of natural world.

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