

Effect of industrialisation on the Nature-Culture Connection: An Ecocritical Enquiry of *Nectar in a Sieve*

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ABSTRACT: *Presently the strong bond between nature and society magnetise the attention of literary critics. Since nature and literature goes hand in hand ecology and ecocriticism developed as significant aspects for the literary enquiry. In addition, consciousness of literary personalities as well as the need of time promoted the ecology and environmental study well. The domain of literature throngs with works dealing with magnificence and power of nature.*

*This sense of anxiety has escalated a new branch of literary theory, specifically Eco-criticism. Ecocriticism investigates the close relationship of nature and environment represented in literature. Moreover, it deals with the natural and cultural concerns and the human perspective towards the nature depicted in literary works. I would attempt in this paper to consider the term Ecocriticism and the role of Ecocriticism in literature. Furthermore, it is an attempt to examine the nature-culture relationship through the reading of Indian English novel, specifically *Nectar in a Sieve* by Kamala Markandaya. *Nectar in a Sieve* pronounces the female protagonist Rukmani's effort to save and re-establish elements of her family's rural life and a strong sense of rootedness to their land-dwelling.*

Key Words: *Countryside, Ecocriticism, Industrialisation, Nature-culture connection, Man- nature kinship.*

The word eco is short of ecology, which is alarmed with the interactions between living organisms in their natural environment as well as their relationships with that physical environment, ecocriticism is a semi neologism. This kinship of man and nature is not just mutually dependent but also interrelated. By analogy, ecocriticism is concerned with the man's relationships with his physical environment reflected in literature. Some of the most acknowledged ecocritics, are Lawrence Buell, Cheryll Glotfelty, Simon C. Estok, Harold Fromm, William Howarth, William Rueckert, Suellen Campbell, Michael P. Branch and Glen A. Love. The foremost appearance of the expression "Ecocriticism" found place in William Rueckert's essay "Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism" in 1978. Though, ecocriticism emerged as a separate discipline only in 1990s, although it is a fact that the relationship between man and his physical environment had always been magnetism to literary critics.

It as an interdisciplinary reading of literature and the environment, it ranges over various subjects like science, literature, anthropology, sociology, psychology etc. and attempts to study the attitude of mankind towards nature. Human approach towards nature is diverge from person to person whence some of the differences driven culturally. This connection of nature and culture shown by Cheryll Glotfelty, he defined ecocriticism as,

Despite the broad scope of inquiry and disparate level of sophistication, an ecological criticism shares the fundamental premise that human culture is connected to the physical world, affecting it and affected by it. Ecocriticism takes as its subject the interconnection between nature and culture. Understanding how nature and culture constantly influence and construct each other is essential to an informed ecocriticism. As a critical stance, it has one foot in literature and the other on land. As a theoretical discourse, it negotiates between the human and non-human. (The Ecocriticism Reader 1996: xix).

Man-nature relationship mirrored through writers and poets throughout different cultures across the globe. In fact, diverse novels, poems and other expressions of literature have been portrayed in the framework of problems concerning nature. But today environmental issues have become a matter of concern for many branches and disciplines of knowledge and development, so ecology and ecocriticism have become important terms in literary expressions at present. Many authors have expressed their concern for nature due to the selfishness of human beings due to growing population, industrialisation and modernisation.

A noteworthy factor in the devastation of environment worldwide is colonialism. The transformation in the social and cultural atmospheres of the world has entirely altered the illustrations of men's attitude towards nature in literary works. In Indian writings in English, there are countless literary works that mirror the idea of Ecocriticism and specifically post-independence literature highlight the pitiful exploitation of the globe.

Rukmani, the female protagonist of Kamala Markandaya's debut novel *Nectar in a Sieve*, published in 1954, attempt to recover and restore foundations of her families' rural life and a strong sense of rootedness to their land. She and her husband equally strive on the land and have an exceptional sense of fitting to it. However, their exclusive dependency on this piece of land for existence is also a cause of their poverty. The relationship between land and Rukmani becomes a significant understanding of Rukmani's sense of belonging to her rural setting. Rukmani, recalls her early days,

My heart sang and my feet were light as I went about my work, getting up at sunrise and going to sleep content. Peace and quiet were ours. How well I recall it, how grateful I am that not all the clamour which invaded our lives later could subdue the memory or still the longing for it. Rather, it has strengthened it: had there not been what has been, I might never have known how blessed we were. (9).

Rukmani connects; her husband for approving her beauty with the beauty that she perceives in her fields. Rukmani recollects her early married times:

"While the sun shines on you and the fields are green and beautiful to the eye, and your husband sees beauty in you which no one has seen before, and you have a good store of grain laid away for hard times, a roof over you and a sweet stirring in your body, what more can a woman ask for?" (8).

However, this concord with nature that she connects her rural life with is fleeting. In Rukmani's family life, almost instantly, industrial development with modern technology stepped into village which takes man away from nature and ultimately entirely terminates their relationship with nature. The tannery implies the modernity and advancement. It converts both, the environment and the commercial conditions of the village. It also carries a drastic change in the relationships amongst villagers. Everyone took this alteration in accordance to their belief, while Kunthi is happy with the tannery, Rukmani who esteems water much so that she gave her daughter a name after the great Asian river, Irawaddy, she realises it as a threat to the village life. Afterwards, the Tannery became the chief cause to losing of her three sons. The tannery facilitated Arjun, Thambi, and Raja to deal with the dire poverty and starvation that they were confronting. Despite the fact it offered employment to them, it also took them away from their family members, consequently, humiliating the significance of their family life. The novel highlights that for a peasant woman, contentment involves bare necessities at the basic level made up largely of food, clothes, shelter and the tranquil beauty of the countryside. Nature, the sun and the exquisiteness of the green fields perform as Rukmani's source of comfort.

Beth Zeleny observes, Markandaya indirectly fixes woman and landscape through her repetitive use of seed imagery - "As giver and nurturer and endure of life, woman participates in the cycle of life as seed, then seedling, which ultimately becomes part of the soil that supports future seed" (Zeleny, 1997).

Step by step Industrialization had changed the village forever. To establish a tannery, distant workers tore down the houses around the field. The Muslim workmen's families also came to live in new houses that are remote from the rest of the villagers. The tanners charmed new professions and shops in village. Many property owners sold-out their land to the burgeoning tannery, and it was dispersing through the countryside. A doctor of foreign country established a hospital. Now industrial town replaced the agricultural village. Merchandise increased prices on all goods, such an extent that villagers and farmers are no longer able to buy their needs. Offspring prefer to work in the tannery instead of helping on their family in farming. Only Rukmani had been patted by the absence of those sparrows which has become nasty and boisterous, now there is no singing of a bird can be heard but noise of tannery.

Not in the town, where all that was natural had long been sacrificed, but on its outskirts, one could still see the passing of the seasons. For the town there were the crowds, and streets battened down upon the earth, and the filth that men had put upon it; and one walked with care for what might lie beneath one's feet or threaten from before or behind; and in this preoccupation forgot to look at the sun or the stars, or even to observe they had changed their setting in the sky: and knew nothing of the passage of the time in dry frenzy, by looking at a clock. But for us, who lived by the green, quiet fields, perilously close though these were to

the town, nature still gave its muted message. Each passing day, each week, each month, left its sign, clear and unmistakable. (117).

Conclusion

To conclude, I would like to state that Industrialization adds key part for the monetary development and affluence of a nation. Although it offers employment and wealth generation while it leads to environmental deterioration as well. It promotes the exhaustion of natural resources. It causes pollution chiefly air, water and soil pollution. And today's most burning issue Global warming and climatic changes are the major penalties of industrialization. Ecocriticism pursues to inquire the interdependence of man and nature. Ecocriticism have a deep interest in construing humans' relationships with co-beings. Ecocritics have inclined to focus on systemic and unintended harms including a wide range of both animals and plants and to whole planet. Lastly, I would heartily conclude that humans, who have the ability to reason, should become aware for the condition of the only planet where life exists.

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