



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

Romanticism Enhancing Ecocriticism

Dr K Kavitharaj

Assistant Professor (English),

PSGCAS,,TN, India.

ABSTRACT

Nature is all powerful, cannot be understood and acquired by human beings or any beings in the world. It is beyond the understanding and knowledge of human beings. Also it is always been an invaluable treasure to all the organisms in the world, being the source of food, energy, matter, products etc... To the astonishment, the beauty of nature is diverse- hilly and snowy Himalayas, desert and hot Rajasthan, coastal and fertile Kerala, forests in Madhya Pradesh. To add, nature is an embodiment of beauty where even the flow of lava from the volcano seems magnificent. Nature is not only omnipotent, it would also show its ill face when human beings try to show their upper hand on nature. That significant and inseparable nature in the lives of human beings is always reflected of literature, as literature is the study of characters or happenings in relation to nature. The study of literature and nature became prominent only in 1990's but the combo exists even from the time literature was written. When people and nations began to dominate and exploit nature, the end result would probably influence and affect their future generation. The realization of this perspective nurtured ecocriticism which appreciated and analysed the significance of nature that is reflected through literature. This paper enhances romanticism in ecocriticism which means praise and love for nature and this would imbibe the thought to preserve nature as love for something would back up the habit of keeping it safe.

Ecocriticism and its characteristics

Literature is the most comprehensive study of man which influence and stimulate response from experts to create, appreciate and evaluate it. Literary criticism is the interpreting art where the critics analyse and evaluate a work of art as it is defined by M P Sinha that literary criticism is a body of principles that define literature and function as guidelines for the analysis and evaluation of literary text. One of the prominent theories which was highlighted in the end of the twentieth century is the ecocriticism which is the study of literature and environment from an interdisciplinary point of view where all sciences come together to analyze the brainstorm possible solution for the correction of the contemporary environmental situation. Ecocriticism was officially heralded by the publication of two seminal works both published in the mid-1990s. They are the Ecocriticism

Reader, edited by Cheryl Glotfelty and Harold Fromm, and Environmental Imagination by Lawrence Buell. Camino Gomides has defined ecocriticism as the field of enquiry that analyses and promotes works of art which raise moral questions about human interactions with nature while also motivating individuals to live a eco- friendly life which would be binding over generations. Ecocriticism is also known as ecopoetics, green studies and environmental literary criticism. Ecocritics investigate the underlying ecological values and examine human perception of wilderness and how it has changed throughout history. It highlights whether current environmental issues are accurately represented or mentioned in popular culture and modern literature.

William Rueckert was the first person to use the term ecocriticism. In 1978, Rueckert published an essay titled Literature and Ecology; an experiment in Ecocriticism. He focused on “the application of ecology and ecological concepts to the study of literature” {Reprinted on the Ecocriticism Reader on p 107}. Meanwhile ecologically minded individuals and scholars published progressive works of ecotheory and criticism which were concerned on moral struggle rather than mere biological survival. As Glotfelty noted in the Ecocriticism Reader “one indication of the disunity of the early efforts is that these critics rarely cited one another’s work: they didn’t know that it existed... Each was a single voice howling in the wilderness”. Nevertheless, Ecocriticism failed to emerge into a coherent movement in the late 1970s and indeed it happened in the USA only during the 1990s. In the mid-1980s, scholars began to work collectively to establish ecocriticism as a genre, primarily through the work of Western Literary Association in which nature writing was revaluated. In 1990, at the University of Nevada, Reno, Glotfelty became the first person to hold an academic position as a professor of Literature and the Environment. It served as the intellectual home of Ecocriticism. In the USA Ecocriticism is often associated with Association for the Study of Literature and Environment, an organization with thousands of members in the US alone. From the late 1990s, new branches of ASLE and affiliated organizations were started in the UK, Japan, Korea, Australia, New Zealand, India (OSLE), Canada and Europe. Oxford bibliographies define ecocriticism as:

Ecocriticism is a broad way for literary and cultural scholars to investigate the global ecological crisis through the intersection of literature, culture, and the physical environment. Ecocriticism originated as an idea called “literary ecology” (Meeker 1972, cited under [General Overviews](#)) and was later coined as an “-ism” (Rueckert 1996, cited under [General Overviews](#))

Ecocriticism is to study how individuals behave and react to nature. Consequently, it gained attention because of higher social emphasis on environmental destruction due to industrialisation, population explosion etc... it is not only the analysis of literature from the view of nature, but it demands action and ethics which involves society and human behaviour. A specific feature of ecocriticism is that, any literary text of any age of any language could be analysed based on this theory. Nature could be associated with any discipline. Hence there are different strands of ecocriticism which are ecosophy, ecocide, deep ecology, ecospirituality, ecotheology etc... The focus of ecocriticism is on how does the literary text approach, view and analyse nature and what one learn from it which may demand involvement and action.

Romanticism and its significance

Romanticism is an artistic literary and intellectual movement originated towards the end of eighteenth century in England which had its emphasis on emotions, individualism, idealization of nature etc... The publication of Lyrical Ballads in 1778 by William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge mark the beginning of the

movement which was preceded by enlightenment. The movement lasted from 1800 to 1850 cherishing the writings of William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, John Keats, Lord Byron, Percy Bysshe Shelley.

Romanticism was a literary, artistic and intellectual movement that began in Europe towards the end of the eighteenth century. Its emphasis was on individualism, idealization of nature and glorification of the past. Romanticism reflected strongly in literature, visual arts, music, education, politics etc... The movement emphasized aesthetic experience of the sublime and beauty of nature. Another aspect of Romanticism is that it revived Medievalism. The nature of Romanticism is to give primary significance to the expression of the artist.

Characteristics of Romantic poetry

Romantic poetry is a contemplative reflection over the interaction of human with their environment. Sublime, is an important concept in Romantic Poetry which refers to the use of language and description that excites thoughts and emotions beyond ordinary experiences. Also there is a strong power and passion of the writer which is reflected in his work. Imagination is a distinctive feature of romantic poetry where the poet imagines, feels and then writes. Love for nature is another significant characteristic of Romantic Poetry which is a source of inspiration to the writers though their view of nature varies from one poet to another. Wordsworth recognized nature as God and approached it philosophically. Shelley believed that nature is a living thing and there is a union between man and nature where he approaches nature intellectually whereas, Coleridge had a realistic perspective towards nature. To him nature is not the source of joy and pleasure but the reaction to it depends on one's mood.

To William Wordsworth, poetry is "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" which the poet then "recollects in tranquillity". The poem *The Daffodils* is a perfect example for Romanticism which reflects Wordsworth's love for nature. Wordsworth was inspired while walking with his sister, Dorothy, around Glencoyne Bay in the Lake District where he viewed a whole lot of daffodils. This view would be a common one to the people around the place, but it was Wordsworth who got inspired by the scene which he later transformed it into a poem. The poem may sound simple, but through his spontaneous line, Wordsworth makes the readers to imagine the scene which inspired him. The below lines reflect how nature would have a permanent impact which results in good memory and happiness.

They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.

Thus Wordsworth expresses his love for nature which nurtures harmony and happiness.

Another most significant poet and critic who influenced the Romantic Movement is Samuel Taylor Coleridge. His concept of poetry had a great impact on other contemporary and young writers. Coleridge's works reflect love for nature, interest in the supernatural and the mysterious, the revolutionary zeal, experiments of verse, simplicity of diction, humanism, individualism, sensuousness etc... his poem *Kubla Khan* reflects the vision of

mystical relationships with imagination and nature. To him poetry is the synthesis of the whole activity of the poet. He considers imagination as:

the mediatrix between, and reconciler of nature and men, it is, therefore, the power of humanizing nature, of infusing the thoughts and possessions of man into everything is the object of his contemplation.

Kubla Khan poem reflects the characteristics of poetry that Coleridge embellished. The poem highlights Romanticism by picturing a dream world of Coleridge's imagination with the theme of man's interaction with nature. In the poem, Coleridge had applied the "willing suspension of disbelief". It is mentioned in Coleridge's preface to Kubla Khan, that the poem was composed one night after an opium influenced dream reflected his reading about Shangdu, the summer capital of the Yuan Dynasty. The poem describes Kubla Khan's pleasure dome built alongside a sacred river and the song of the Abyssinian maid which enraptures Khan. He wishes to revive her song and so to fill the pleasure dome with music. Thus this poem makes the reader to imagine "a sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice" and picture the palace and place of Kubla Khan. Again this poem signifies the love for nature and mysterious sensuousness

The poems written during the Romantic Movement, when compared to the poem written in the later centuries when it is do with the praise of nature, there is no extensive change. Although the poets write on what they see, feel and experience through nature of their Age, the basic perspective is one and the same: the love and liking for nature and experience enjoyment and ecstasy in its trueself. Though nature is portrayed down the Ages by poets irrespective of their language, register, background, culture etc... , the unknown, invaluable and Godly nature still exists and will exist even after the extinction of human race.

Romanticism and Ecocriticism

The aspect to be considered is that ecocriticism may be termed so in the twentieth century, but it should be noted that there is no literature which could exist in abstract. Literature is a reflection of life of people who are a part of nature. For instance any play or novel is set in a background. Even before the character is introduced, the place, environment and condition of weather is explained. The narration of the writer makes the reader to picture the scene in his inward eye. The background basically gives a hint or preoccupied idea on the incident to happen. For instance, in Macbeth, the opening scene is that of thunder and lightening in a desert place. This does not reflect a positive note or happening. Thus the background set a backdrop to the plot and its characterisation. So this nature, its description, symbolism are expressed in literature and all the discipline of arts as human beings live with their surroundings, have appreciation for beauty and nature and would find harmony and ecstasy in nature as it is God's true gift to being in the world and its glory cannot be explained with words alone but with great astonishment.

Works Cited

1. Andrew Bennett (12 February 2015). [*William Wordsworth in Context*](#). Cambridge University Press. p. 191. [ISBN 978-1-107-02841-8](#)
2. Barry, Peter. *The Beginning of theories*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002.
3. Coleridge, Samuel Taylor (1914). [*On Poesy or Art*](#). *Harvard Classics*. - first delivered as a lecture in 1818
4. Coleridge, Samuel Taylor. *Biographia Literaria*. Princeton UP, 1985, p. 10
5. Hartman, Geoffrey (1987). *Wordsworth's Poetry, 1787–1814*. New Haven: Yale University Press. pp. 329–331. [ISBN 9780674958210](#).
6. James Gillman (2008) *The Life of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*. Bastion Books
7. Stephen Gill, *William Wordsworth: A Life*, [Oxford University Press](#), 1989, pp. 132–133.
8. Wordsworth, William (1800). [*Lyrical Ballads with Other Poems*](#). Vol. I (2 ed.). London: Printed for T.N. Longman and O. Rees. Retrieved 13 November 2014.; Wordsworth, William (1800). [*Lyrical Ballads with Other Poems*](#). Vol. II (2 ed.). London: Printed for T.N. Longman and O. Rees. Retrieved 15 November 2014.

