



HUMAN RESPONSES TO ENVIRONMENT: 'A LITERARY ASPECT'

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ABSTRACT

Literature has always been an inexhaustible source of inspiration and enlightenment to create a growing awareness among people to love and respect nature. Poets have the uncanny knack of reminding us of the bittersweet truths of life and living. Through the sacred books, religious texts and literary texts, Poetry has represented and explained the mysteries of life and the Universe. The enlightened minds of all countries of all ages have penned down the important aspects of divine goodness of moral wisdom, of benevolence and personal prudence.

According to the Bible, Genesis Ch I to II it contains several fundamental ideas about the natural world and our place in it. The opening verses of genesis states that God is the source of all life and that reaction is good furthermore, the formation of Adam "The dust of the ground" highlights the connection between human beings and the earth because Adam, the word for "Human being", is a play on Adamah, the word for "Ground or Earth".

God desires all creatures to "be fruitful and multiply". The ideas that God is the source of all life, that creation is good, that human beings are connected to the earth and that God is concerned for all creatures strongly suggest that we are to value and respect the earth and its many forms of life.

Illustrating, the Romantic poet, William Wordsworth, the English countryside was a constant source of poetic inspiration. At a time when industrial revolution was beginning to make its mark on the landscape in the form of growing cities and smoking chimneys, Britain's few areas of wilderness took on an almost religious significance. For William Wordsworth communion with the natural environment was essential for spiritual growth. William Wordsworth lived out this belief in practice, walking for many miles a day in his beloved lake district. In one of his most famous poem "I wandered lonely as cloud", William Wordsworth remembers coming across a host of daffodils dancing in the breeze. He describe how the sights not only filled him with joy at the time, but serves as spiritual resource later in life.



*"For oft, when on my couch I lie,
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye,
Which is the bliss of solitude:
And then my heart with pleasure
Fills, and dances with the daffodils."*

At present our dominant ways of life are to such an extent that there is hardly any space left for other life on this lonely planet. War and Chaos, pollution, population explosion, uncontrolled tourism and more over science and technology which has equipped us with too sophisticated weaponry that plays havoc with the very arteries of life is leading our world from one crisis to another. Nature too rebels against these tortures making us understand the need to conserve the flora and fauna. Illustrating P.B. Shelly who recognizes nature's merciless potential:

*"But a flood of ruin
Is there, that from the boundaries of the sky
Rolls it's perpetual stream; vast pines are strewing
It's destined path, or in the mangled soil
Branchless and shattered stand the rocks drawn down,
The limits of the dead and living world,
never to be reclaimed." (Norton 2, P. 688)*

William Wordsworth remarks in his sonnet "The world is too much with us":

*"This sea that bares her bosom to the moon,
The winds which will be howling at all hours,
And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers,
For this for everything, we are out of tune."*

Tennyson, crafts a woman to represent nature, the one who cares for nothing. Nature is portrayed as extremely powerful and arbitrary;

*"Thou makest thine appeal to me:
I bring to life, I bring to death;
The spirit does but mean the breath:
I know no more" (In memoriam 56 (4-8))*



Robert Frost, saw nature as an alien force capable of destroying man, but he also saw man's struggle with nature as a heroic battle. As told in his poem, "Our Hold on the Planet."

*"There is much in nature against us, But we forget.
Take nature altogether since time began,
Including human nature, in peace and war,
And it must be a little more in favour of man."*

Renowned Indian poet, Rabindranath Tagore's engagement with Nature was a continuous motif in his poetry, Tagore personifies nature as his mother in his poem "Clouds and Waves," he remarks,

*"I will be the waves
and you will be a strange shore,
I shall roll on and on and on,
and break upon your lap with laughter.
And no-one in the world will know
Where we both are."*

Tagore was also alert to realizing the fact that a random exploitation of nature could spell disaster. His creative instinct thus combined to create a series of poems that could use the aesthetic to remind us the dependence of human life on nature and the consequences of neglecting this bond.

At present 'Ecology' has become the catchword and Environment literary concerns are reflected through writings giving them a new term 'Ecocriticism' or Ecological criticism. or Nature writing. Environment literary criticism focuses on the ways in which literature shapes and responds to a variety of environmental concerns, from animal welfare to pollution to global warming. Poetry might sound simply anachronistic in a world of super technology but the poet requires to be read, heard and heeded to. Poetry of nature is something a little more sensitive, a little more evocative, a little more self-reflexive. As one self-reflexive ecocritic has phrased it: Speaking of nature is speaking for nature! Thus, to conserve nature, each individual must inculcate a sense of eternal values and contribute towards the growth of a well-being and sustenance of a better human race. The symbolic visual narratives on the walls of cave homes to the present ecocriticism convey the unbreakable bond between man and environment. E.O. Wilson states, "We should preserve every scrap of biodiversity as priceless while we learn to use it and come to understand what it means to humanity."



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