



21st CENTURY ENVIRONMENT AND LITERATURE

MAHENDRA PAL ARYA

Research Scholar, Department of English
Government Degree College Tanakpur, Champawat, Uttarakhand
Email: mpal0059@gmail.com



Article Received: 24/05/2022
Article Accepted: 28/06/2022
Published online:30/06/2022
DOI: [10.33329/rjelal.10.2.263](https://doi.org/10.33329/rjelal.10.2.263)

Abstract

We find that Literature and environment have an unbreakable bond. Since prehistory, literature and the arts have been drawn to portrayals of physical environments and human-environment interactions. Along with the development of man, the synergy between environment and literature has been getting Stronger. Just as the painting done on the walls by primitive man reflects the literature of that time, in the same way, the modernization of today can be seen in the works of modern writers. The Environment has contributed to the fundamental development of literature. Although man is still completely unable to understand the environment yet we can say that human beings have made great progress. So, I want to say that the 1960s gave rise to a rich array of fictional and nonfictional writings concerned with humans changing relationship with the natural world. since early 2021, however, the long-standing interest in literature studies on these matters generated the initiative most commonly known as "Ecocriticism". In this paper, I am telling about my research topic 21^{st-century} environment and Literature, I will start my paper from the views of some writers who love nature then I will come to 21^{st-century} literature.

Keywords: Ecocriticism, environmental studies, Literature and Environment, Human- Environment relationship.

Introduction

"Nature loves every creature equally and describes the true definition of love. We should also love her like our mother."

On the one hand, the environment gives life to all the people and on the other hand, literature communicates the feeling to all the living beings. Everything that is living on the earth apportions knowledge and it is very important to have literature to maintain the communication of this knowledge.

In my opinion, there are two types of environment; one to which man does not pay attention (spiritual Environment) and the other that which man tries to know (Physical Environment). Just as it is difficult for the body to survive without the soul, similarly a person cannot understand the environment without the knowledge of literature. Since ancient times, man has been making a lot of efforts to understand the environment. In my opinion,

"Literature is born out of the environment and then literature reflects the environment and makes it

better. Then, new literature emerges from a better environment. This process continues automatically. Good literature needs a good society and again a good society depends on good understanding. Good understanding leads to the sublime."

So, we can say that Environment and Literature are interconnected. Nature has been a recurring theme in poetry through the ages, its various landscapes, changing seasons, and creative as well as destructive powers and beautiful phenomena have fascinated poets of every generation stimulating them to create verse on it.

Romantic writer William Wordsworth depicts how the environment played a significant role in his life. He expressed his sadness and happiness towards nature through his pen which took him beyond the physical beauty of nature.

Five years have passed; five summers, with the length

Of five long winters! And again I hear

These waters, rolling from their mountain-springs

With a soft inland murmur.

Returning after five years to the same place where Romantic writer William Wordsworth (Harbinger of nature) found peace and tranquillity, his memories blossomed under the pretty sky. His happiness knew no bounds. Although in the city his life was full of turbulence yet nature never left him lonely and like an elder sister, Nature inspired him to write. In the year 1798, William Wordsworth again visited Tintern abbey and he felt the same joy and happiness that he felt five years ago, nature never changed itself.

Nature never did betray the heart that loved her.
(Wordsworth, 1798)

Romantic and Nature poet William Wordsworth conspicuously defines the perception of love; He conveyed a message that nature never betrays those people who loved it. Nature never breaks expectations, it always gives love. One can feel utmost happiness in the lap of Nature. Nature does not know how to pretend love nor does it ask you for anything in return.

Eco criticism

Ecocriticism is the perception to understand literature from an environmental point of view. It looks at both aspects of the environment whether it is the positive aspect of the environment or the negative aspect of the environment.

According to Cheryll Glotfelty "**Ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment**" (Glotfelty, 1996).

Ecocriticism sheds light on certain things with a very clear perspective.

1 – Depiction of Reality

Learning literature with Environment is the development of self-consciousness toward nature and spirituality. Famous Indian writer R.K. Narayan's book "**The Man-Eater of Malgudi**" clearly depicts the reality of the modern environment. Through this book, one can easily understand how human society has begun to destroy nature and because of that, they will be headed toward their downfall. "The Man-Eater of Malgudi" presents a character named **Vasu** who exposes modern society. He was a taxidermist (**Taxidermy** is the art of preserving an animal's body via mounting (over an armature) or stuffing, for display or study. Animals are often, but not always, portrayed in a lifelike state. (Wikipedia, 2016)) who killed animals for his profession and eventually that leads him towards his death. Similarly, (we can see a real Taxidermist from Srinagar named "**Habibullah Butt**" who was arrested by Kashmir Police was doing some clandestine activities - finishing, tanning and fitting banned leopard skins smuggled into the valley from Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and West Bengal) (Animal skin smuggling racket busted in J&K, 2013).

Whereas, in the same novel a character named "**Nataraj**" depicts the caring part of the human brain which takes care of the environment and leads us to a fulgent future. His love for an elephant named "**Kumar**" represents an environment which is healthy and organized properly, when he knows that Vasu is going to kill "**Kumar**" he did his best to save him. His affection

towards his fellow workers shows that he has been successful in creating a prime environment.

2- Focuses on the Environmental crises

One of the new problems that have emerged in today's era is the use of Plastic. Our Prime Minister Narendra Damodardas Modi launches various awareness campaigns on single-use Plastics. Which Government of India has notified the Plastic Waste Management Amendment Rules, 2021, which prohibits identified single-use plastic items which have low utility and high littering potential by 2022. (Plastic Waste Management Amendment Rules, 2021, prohibiting identified single-use plastic items by 2022).

Famous Historian and Environmentalist "Ramchandra Guha" in his book "Environmentalism: A Global History" talked about an idea that he called a stage for the development of environmental consciousness. Then, he focuses on certain crises related to the environment that comes during World War II. (Guha, 1999) Addressing the whole earth and human civilization Ramchandra Guha renders an explicit image of environmental degradation and the influence of these unwanted activities will compel us to leave our planet.

21st Century Environment and Literature

On perusing the literature thoroughly, we find that all of the great poets born till today have written about their environment, taking up aspects of their lives. A poet who lives by the seaside mentions the sea in most of his works; this shows his affection for the Sea. Playwrights and essayists find characters from their environment to characterize their stories. The basis of all imaginary things is also considered to be real things, which are found only in the environment. The great Dramatist, Playwright as well as a wonderful actor of England William Shakespeare (Bard of Avon) used a specific type of bird "Tailor Bird" in his play "The Merchant of Venis". The melodious music of the environment inspires poets to write good songs. Even in extreme circumstances, the environment does not leave the side of literature. The best companion of man is the environment, so whenever the clouds of sorrow

surround the poet, he finds himself attached to the environment. There is unique literature on the basic elements of life like air, water, clouds, trees and all other natural things in the environment, the water falling from a spring gives birth to literature with its melodious voice, although, it is another thing that natural literature is not in perfect writing (that can not be defined), it is natural to understand. We must have a natural soul to feel it. This soulful happiness is with every human being, but some artists like writers and painters use them well. Just as a lover experiences pain in waiting for his beloved and the disturbance of his mind gives birth to a new song which could be sad, Likewise, the dry earth also feels pain for the water falling from the clouds and the writer reveals this through his work.

A writer is a medium to convey the literature of the environment to society. He bridges the gap between the two by connecting natural literature with human literature. Hence, I can say that environment is the mother of literature.

The cuckoo never lays its egg in its own nest; rather it lays its egg in the crow's nest, which could be an example of dramatic Literature. But, when that child will face the reality, a new term will come called "Anagnorisis" which was already defined by Aristotle in his work Poetics.

Every single writer, who is a patient

To heal his wound needs an environment.

Every poet who experiences pain finds medicine for his suffering in nature. Hence, a poet is also a child of the Environment. The literature of the 21st century exposes the atmosphere of modern society. In the last few years, the circumstances have not been favourable to man. I think the world has changed again after 2019 and literature has been divided into two parts.

Pre – Corona

Post – Corona

With the change in environment, new literature has been born and we can see it. Scott Galloway's **Post Corona: from Crisis to Opportunity** is the best example of Post Corona Literature. Due

to small disturbances in the environment, unemployment, poverty, and disorder have been encouraged. Everyone (whether educated or not) is vulnerable to COVID-19. The rich class has tried to save itself in some way and the poor class could not do anything except pray. Nevertheless, many people have lost their lives due to Covid-19. That was the time when literature emerged from online technology. A wave of online audiobooks started pouring in. From drama to poetries, everything became available online. Due to the changing environment, people were unable to go out. Many companies took advantage of this and started taking literature to every person through technology. Due to the changing environment, people stopped reading handbooks. Everything they read is online.

Three changes in the modern world.

Changed in Environment.

Changed in Technology.

A Shift from Handbooks to Online Books.

Now even this condition has come that people are slowly entering the simulated environment where things are pretentious and momentary. Its influence can also be seen in modern literature.

The literature also highlights the battles taking place in modern society. Many books have also been written on the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine in modern society. One of which is "**The Gate of Europe: A History of Ukraine**".

That's why we can say,

"As will the environment, so will the literature."

But it is not at all that the existence of old literature ends with the advent of new literature. Rather, somewhere new literature is a development of old literature. Just the way of looking at society from the point of view of the environment changes, due to which literature also changes. As the environment of a civilized society is better, its literature will also reflect better aspects of that society. But, the diseases, battles, and corruption prevalent in modern society represent unhealthy literature. In this literature, there is talk of spiritual

things but only for the sake of pretences. Modern society is on the way to its decline, due to which literature will also change itself.

Conclusion

So, through this paper, I have tried to explain how literature is connected with Environment. The environment is the mother of Literature and it has a deep impact on our life. Whenever Environment has changed, new literature takes birth from it. A writer is an observer, a true medium to observe and describe whatever happened in nature. He can make a period alive through his work.

"If the human body runs by soul the soul runs by Environment."

Literature comes from every source.

Whether a bird sings or a lion roars.

References

- Plastic Waste Management Amendment Rules, 2021, prohibiting identified single-use plastic items by 2022. (2022). *Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change*.
- Animal skin smuggling racket busted in J&K. (2013). *India Today*.
- Glotfelty, C. (1996). *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in literary ecology*.
- Guha, R. (1999). *Environmentalism: A Global History*.
- Wikipedia. (2016). *Taxidermy*.
- Wordsworth, w. (1798). *Tintern abbey*. In w. Wordsworth, *lyrical ballad*. London.