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PIQUANT FACETS OF INTEGRATED OIKOS IN WILLA CATHER'S *THE BEST YEARS*

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Abstract

This paper is an attempt to bring out the ideas of Nirmal Selvamony Poetic methodology. Nirmal Selvamony contributes his ideas to poems, but his ideas and thoughts can be applied to any genres comprising eco-friendly works. The writings of Willa Cather generally packed with her caring nature towards the earth. The traits of her writings are featured with ecocritical ideas. An Integrated oikotic people lived along with nature. They live like kith and kin in the society. In this society humans celebrate nature and they love nature and they learn to live along with the nature. They worship nature. This kind of people have the essence of tasting the life by sharing their love kindness and responsibility towards fellow human beings. Willa Cather's work *The Best Years*, *Miss Knightly* is filled with integrated oikotic quality. She loves her friend and her friendship and also her family. Willa Cather's *The Best Years* is really a short story with integrated oikotic people.

Key Words: Integrated Oikos, *The Best Years*, Oikopoetic Methodology

Literary Criticism is the study of evaluation and interpretation of literature. Literature is the spontaneous overflow of thought and expressions. The number of authors and the number of books increased with different genres poems, plays dramas fiction nonfiction novels short stories. So, the part of critics and the role of criticism arose to review all literature works. The job of a critic is to describe the good and the bad points of any kind of work. To describe a work, there is a need of criticism in all the nook and corners of the sides of any literary work. The word criticism first made its appearance in English in the early nineteenth century.

Literary Criticism is born to review the literary work of any author. Literary Criticism usually views on the detailed study of all the facts including the period of author, social and historical backgrounds that urges the author to produce the literary work. The origin of criticism is from Greek. Then it gradually moves on to Latin and then to English. Initially criticism is to judge the literary works and produce a balanced judgement. But nowadays it means to point out the bad features of the work also. It has its history from the classical period. No one can cross literary criticism without the name of Aristotle *Poetics*. Still any one finds difficult concepts to understand like mimesis and catharsis. Then came to Plato and he attacks *Poetics*.

Aristotle and Plato are the classical critics. Then there is an existence of Medieval Literary Criticism. Giorgio Valla's translation of Aristotle's *Poetics* play a significant role in the history of literary criticism. He translated *Poetics* in Latin. The notable person Lodovico Castelvetro wrote commentaries on Aristotle's *Poetics*.

The period in 1700's and 1800's is an enlightenment period for literary criticism. In classical and Medieval periods criticism focusses only on society, social culture mainly on educational. IN the enlightenment period, its focus is purely on entertainment. In this period common people come to know about all the literary works clearly and they can understand it in a vry precise manner. The critical reviews help the readers to discuss both on the good and the bad points together. The emergence of entertainment through literature provides a strong path for the growth of criticism.

In the early nineteenth Century, the critics bring in new ideas. The term criticism develops and it takes the soul responsibility of the literature. The late nineteenth century begins to focus more on Literary criticism than for literary works. Literary criticism grows as formalism, readers response theory and some other doctrines also. Critics and their ideas getting into the literature. Their ideas become literary works for the readers. New ideas and paths have been k own to all the researchers.

Literary criticism grows and develops and gets into a new form. Critics begin to show their care towards the earth. The earth centred approach begins to flourish. To save environment from man who is the protector and protractor of the nature environmental movements begin in the 1960's. It begins to focus on the relationship between human beings and nature. Ecocriticism is an idea created from the word ecology. The concern of human beings towards the nature and their longingness to save the nature sow seeds to the development of this criticism. The term ecocriticism is coined by William Rueckert in his essay *Literature and Ecology: An experiment in Ecocriticism*. In this essay William can express his ideas to apply ecology and ecological concepts to the study of literature. It brings awareness to all the researchers and it impress most

of the researchers to look upon all the literary works in this idea.

'Ecocrotic' is a term derived from Greek. It contains the view that the world should be take care well. William Howarth says in the beginning of his essay *Some Principles of Ecocriticism*. Eco and Critic both derive from Greek, oikos and kritis and in tandem they mean "house Judge" which may surprise many lovers of green, outdoor writing. A long-winded glass on ecocritic might run as follows " a person who judges the merits and faults of writings that depict the effects of culture upon nature, with a view toward celebrity nature bearing action"(69).

From the term ecocriticism, one can come to the conclusion, that human beings are interdependent and inseparable from the nature. They should take the responsibility of protecting the nature. It is the duty of the human beings to give nature to their future generation. Though there may be influences of science and technology, it should be used to protect it and develop it. Cherryl Glotfelty introduces Ecocriticism in his book *The Eco critical Reader: Landmark in Literary Ecology* as

the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment. Just as feminist criticism examines language and literature from a gender-conscious perspective and Marxist criticism brings an awareness of modes of production and economic class to its relating texts, ecocriticism takes an earth centered approach to literary studies (1996:xviii)

Then came Lawrence Buell and Harold Fromm, they also contribute to this idea. Buell produces *The Environmental Imagination* in 1995 and Harold Fromm joined hid hands with Cherryl Glotfelty provides collection essays in the title *The Ecocriticism Reader* in 1996. These books bring out ab environmental awakening among the literary practitioners. William Howarth is a specialist in American Literary Manuscripts. His essay *Some principles of Ecocriticism* describes the origin and the growth of ecocriticism. Glen A Love a responsible leader, viewing the literature in environmental perspectives. He rediscovers human nature. He and his biologist wife Rhodo Love, published the ground

breaking anthology *Environmental Crisis* at the beginning of the modern environmental movement. Love's notion triggers many literary people and they begin to look the literature in an ecological view. Glen A Love shares his opinion of ecocriticism in his *Practical Ecocriticism*. Joseph W. meekeralso shares his view on ecocriticism. According to Love, geography acts as a medieval between the land and the humans.

Many critics point out ecology and literature are the flow of energy and it sustains the path of life. The introduction of technology has given more comfortable life for a man, but the mind of men has a love and concern for the nature. There are different kinds of ecocriticism. Oiko criticism or oiko poetics is a kind of ecocriticism which manipulates oikological concepts in analysing the texts. Nirmal Selvamony in his *Oikopoetic Methodology* examines the term oikos in tamil and says that 'tinai' is an equivalent word for oikos. Nirmal Selvamony categorized oikopoetic methodology in to three basic kinds of oikos. According to him, Integrative, Hierarchic and Anarchic types of oikos shape the form of poetry.

In Integrative oikos, the four legged and the teo legged lived like kith and kin. As the civilization progressed Hierarchic oikos entered. There people view nature as a resource and they think that nature is created for humans. These kinds of people create a new kind of relationship sacred at the top, the humans in the middle and nature at the bottom. The transformation in the minds of the people leads to the extraction and more usage of nature. These kinds of people give a split in the minds of everyone. They split into sacred and the humans, the superior and the inferior, the domestic and the wild animals, the wet land and the dry land.

Hierarchic oikos develops and they progress to be an anarchaic oikos. This anarchaic form of people are completely different from integrative and Hierarchic people. They are highly dependent on money and materials. They utter the word settle down by calculating the wealth one can attained in his life. It is highly horrible nowadays. In the midst of people one can see some mysterious mind set of the people who are different from

anarchaic people. Though they live along with those people, they are showing their care and concern over the environment. Here also anarchaic kind of people delineated between anarchaically inclined people and non anarchaically inclined people.

Such type of characters can be seen and viewed in the society of Willa Cather Writings. Willa Cather was an American writer. Her writings are known for her description and great plains. She was a Pulitzer Prize winner. Willa Cather and her family moved from Virginia to Webster country Nebraska. Her childhood memories and thoughts remain aa a setting for the most of her novels. Willa Cather is a well known as a nature writer. Initially her works and her writings are not recognised but later her works has an amazing attraction towards readers and researchers. Her themes and her ideas are still relevant to the younger generation. She has written 12 novels, more than 8 short stories and poems. Her care and concern for nature seem to be appeared in all her writings.

The Best Years is a short story. It is published after her death in the collection of short stories *The Old Humanity and the Others*. Most of the critics degraded and they almost ignored her last short story. Some critic may say that her last story is the 'bla bla' of her old age. But I can say that is the not only her last short story, it is her last designed and her last breath for her motherly care of the earth. In this short story *The Best Years* her characters are having the same mentality with the land and nature. They know that they are there to build the land and protect the land. People are living only by protecting the land. If not, they will be punished by God. Her characters wished to be an Integrated oikos. They wanted to live along with the nature. Their nature to survive along with the odds is the source of her writings.

Miss. Evangeline Knightly the protagonist of the short story *The Best Years* loves Nebraska and Kenasa Area. Leslay joins her as a teacher and they become very close. They become friends and she offers her a job. While chating Knightly can understand the homesick feelings of Leslay . Leslay love her brothers and their presence. Once Lelay joins her hands with Knightly to meet their

hometown, they have to cross the fields and Leslay begins to bring back her childhood memories. Leslay meets her family members and she begins to share everything with the family. Mr & Mrs. Freguesson are very happy. A small travel in the life of Leslay is marked as a memordom in the minds of Knightly. While attending the conference Knightly is informed that Leslay is died of Pneumonia.

Mrs. Thorndike, a grand transformation of Miss Knightly, Visits Leslay 's Hometown and she visited her mother. Mrs. Thorndike can remember her best years with Leslay and she can recall her friendship. She can understand how her friend Leslay mark an influence or she has shown a n impact in her life. This is one of the functions of integrated oikotic people celebrating the friendship. These integrated type of oikos can being all the people together and live with the memories.

The integrated type of oikotic people is sacred to the nature., culture. The humans of these kind of oikos have enjoyed their freedom with responsibilities, duties and obligations. Their power of the relationship springs and blooms with love and affection. There may be shift from integrative type of oikotic people to Anarchic type of oikotic people. But still there are some who lives and has the characteristics of integrative oikos. This character play a vital role in the society in giving the structure and also serve as a bone for the development of the people. This kind of people can react and save nature. In The Best Years, Cather tries to bring the characteristic of integrated oikos through Miss. Evangeline Knightly.

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