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Significance of Green Literature

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ABSTRACT: In English Literature, many writers and poets tried to establish the interrelationship between human experiences and Nature. Especially many poems celebrate Nature and its glory from aesthetic point of view. Poets had been of a philosophical and mystical attitude towards Nature. However, there is also much literature about how Nature is being exploited with excessive human participation.

The paper deals with the importance of green literature and the urgency to make it a part of educational curriculum to sensitize the present generation towards the conservation of Nature. Teaching of green literature can sensitize the present generation towards Nature and its maintenance of ecological balance for a safer human existence.

KEYWORDS: Green Literature, ecocide, poetry, teaching of green literature

I. INTRODUCTION

In modern times of industrial revolution, World Wars and technological development, man exploited Nature by cossetting all natural resources and thereby disturbing the ecosystem more or less in all parts of the world. Moreover, young generations neither appreciate the beauty of Nature nor put extra efforts to save it for their safety. It also raised many concerns about the existence of future generations on this planet. Because man made climate change had already offered many curses such as global warming, extreme temperatures, volcanoes, floods, tsunamis, droughts and sliding of ice mountains so far. By reflecting on the contemporary climate conditions, the paper attempts to facilitate awareness into the issue and explains the urgency and necessity of protecting Nature.

There has been a growing concern among Nature lovers and environmentalists about climate change and its dangerous potential to hamper better human life in the coming years. The younger generations need to develop understanding about threats and dangers both in human life and animal and plant life due to extreme climate change.

The need of the emergence to think about the nature is very well explained by Pramod Nayar – "...mankind is efficiently committing ecocide, making the planet inhospitable for life of any mankind" (Nayar, 241)

The suffering of the people can be reduced if the present generation understands its importance. Otherwise, many parts of the world become wastelands as Eliot describes with 'no hope left for the survival ecosystems'.

In this context, sensitising the present generation about Nature, its beauty and its utility in maintaining peaceful coexistence of all living and nonliving things is the need of the hour. Reading green literatures encourage the young minds to appreciate Nature and to save for their safe survival on this planet.

II. GREEN LITERATURE

Green literature is a genre by itself, and there are plenty of writings on the subject. The prominent green writers such as William Wordsworth, John Keats, Walt Whitman, Henry David Thoreau, in poetry, James Fenimore Cooper, George Orwell or Margaret Atwood in novels celebrated a colourful, distinctive features of the Nature. They employed various literary devices, images, symbols which would bring the Nature to our vicinity.

Some celebrated works of English poets stand out among others with much focus on the description of Nature and its degeneration due to excessive human involvement.

III. ADVANTAGES OF TEACHING GREEN LITERATURE

- Green literature fosters appreciation, sensitivity, and respect for Nature.
- Green studies create curiosity about the beauty of the Nature with the objective of restoring its harmony with the flora and fauna.
- Green literature teaching sensitizes the young minds to understand how much damage has been done to Nature over a period of time.
- By appealing to the present generation, these writings try to shape the ideology about Nature preservation to establish more balanced ecosystems. They understand the strengths of eco balance and work towards a better life in this planet.
- While reading green writing, students understand the most definitive changes occurred to the Nature and understand symptoms of unbalanced ecosystems. They should develop awareness and the strengths of balanced ecosystems and learn to control further damage to the Nature. They need to employ eco-friendly strategies which would not threaten the Nature.

IV. TEACHING OF GREEN LITERATURE

Looking at the significance of green writing and its teaching, it is important to recognise useful materials to teach and the target group. Young children need to be exposed to the literary pieces which encourage them to appreciate and celebrate the beauty of Nature and make attempts to make the world more green and beautiful and safe for their survival. They should further recognise that Nature today is not what it was in previous years and how it acquired different shapes and forms depending on the rate of exploitation. Young generations should aim to create similar natural surroundings as they are described in the poems *The Prelude* by Wordsworth or *Leaves of Grass* by Walt Whitman.

Textbook writers need to explore in detail the wonderful and relevant literary pieces in world literatures to include in the course books drawing examples from different cultures, different literatures and different languages and connecting them with contemporary environmental issues. They should present fascinating insights into Nature-protective strategies that young minds force to employ in the context of the larger map on manmade climate change.

V. DEPICTION OF THE BEAUTY OF NATURE IN GREEN LITERATURE

Green teaching offers the students to get connected with Nature and experience the serenity of vast green lands, clean water bodies, and beautiful flora and fauna. There are poems which are the fullest expressions of Nature and its beauty and harmony.

• Celebration of Nature

More specifically, some poems such as *Walden* By Thoreau or *The Mores* by John Clare or *Binsey Poplars* by G. M. Hopkins or *This Compost* by Walt Whitman or for that matter any Romantic poem by P. B. Shelley or John Keats or William Wordsworth explore and express real beauty of the natural surroundings of countryside with seasonal changes, lush landscapes with floral images, lakes with running waters and so on. They develop our imagination about Nature and its beauty as described in many poems.

Eg: *Spring* By Gerard Manley Hopkins

Nothing is so beautiful as Spring –
When weeds, in wheels, shoot long and lovely and lush;
Thrush's eggs look little low heavens, and thrush
Through the echoing timber does so rinse and wring
The ear, it strikes like lightnings to hear him sing;
The glassy peartree leaves and blooms, they brush
The descending blue; that blue is all in a rush
With richness; the racing lambs too have fair their fling.

What is all this juice and all this joy?
A strain of the earth's sweet being in the beginning
In Eden garden. — Have, get, before it cloy,

Before it cloud, Christ, lord and sour with sinning,
Innocent mind and Mayday in girl and boy,
Most, O maid's child, thy choice and worthy the winning.

Hopkins begins with a very bold statement of his philosophy. His contention that Spring is the most beautiful season is stated with absolute conviction, and allows for no debate. He proceeds to give the evidence in support of this contention, by presenting the reader with a series of images, which try to capture both the beauty and vibrancy of Spring. For Hopkins, every single thing in the universe was unique. Everything contained qualities that helped to define that uniqueness, and to distinguish it from all other things. Hopkins believed that God was responsible for each unique thing.

The poem becomes much more reflective in the sestet. Hopkins begins by posing a question: What does all of this beauty of nature actually signify? Hopkins believed that God was responsible for each unique thing. Hopkins also believed that each living thing had its own unique energy which was also derived from God. The poet asserts that springtime is an image of what the world would have been like in the beginning, before mankind's sinning corrupted it. In a series of complex images, Hopkins manages to suggest what is wrong with the world, provides a vision of the type of world he would like to see, and advocates a return to that time of innocence.

Such poems not only help in physical but Spiritual upliftment of human race. Similarly is *The Prelude* by Wordsworth that explains how wild landscapes are spiritually uplifting and also gives an experience of blessings.

"Ye Presences of Natures in the sky/And on the earth! Ye Visions of the hills!/And Souls of lonely places!"

- **Nature is the ultimate giver**

Green teaching and learning promotes environmental awareness and understand the power of Nature in maintaining our existence on this planet.

In the poem *World*, the poet A.R. Ammons clearly mentions that the Nature provides us everything for our survival.

Breakers at high tide shoot
spray over the jetty boulders
that collects in shallow chips, depressions,

evening the surface to run-off level:
of these possible worlds of held water,
most can't outlast the interim tideless

drought, so are clear, sterile, encased with
salt: one in particular, though, a hole,
providing depth with little surface,

keeps water through the hottest day:
a slime of green algae extends into that
tiny sea, and animals tiny enough to be in a

world there breed and dart and breathe and
die: so we are here in this plant-created oxygen,
drinking this sweet rain, consuming this green.

The lines, "... we are here in this plant-created oxygen, drinking this sweet rain, consuming this green." explains the dependency of man on Nature.

Walt Whitman contemplates the mystery by which humans and animals rot into the life-giving soil in the poem "This Compost"

1
Something startles me where I thought I was safest,
I withdraw from the still woods I loved,
I will not go now on the pastures to walk,
I will not strip the clothes from my body to meet my lover the sea,
I will not touch my flesh to the earth as to other flesh to renew me.

O how can it be that the ground itself does not sicken?
How can you be alive you growths of spring?
How can you furnish health you blood of herbs, roots, orchards, grain?
Are they not continually putting distemper'd corpses within you?
Is not every continent work'd over and over with sour dead?

Where have you disposed of their carcasses?
Those drunkards and gluttons of so many generations?
Where have you drawn off all the foul liquid and meat?
I do not see any of it upon you to-day, or perhaps I am deceiv'd,
I will run a furrow with my plough, I will press my spade through the sod and turn it up underneath,
I am sure I shall expose some of the foul meat.

2
Behold this compost! behold it well!
Perhaps every mite has once form'd part of a sick person—yet behold!
The grass of spring covers the prairies,
The bean bursts noiselessly through the mould in the garden,
The delicate spear of the onion pierces upward,
The apple-buds cluster together on the apple-branches,
The resurrection of the wheat appears with pale visage out of its graves,
The tinge awakes over the willow-tree and the mulberry-tree,
The he-birds carol mornings and evenings while the she-birds sit on their nests,
The young of poultry break through the hatch'd eggs,
The new-born of animals appear, the calf is dropt from the cow, the colt from the mare,
Out of its little hill faithfully rise the potato's dark green leaves,
Out of its hill rises the yellow maize-stalk, the lilacs bloom in the dooryards,
The summer growth is innocent and disdainful above all those strata of sour dead.

What chemistry!
That the winds are really not infectious,
That this is no cheat, this transparent green-wash of the sea which is so amorous after me,
That it is safe to allow it to lick my naked body all over with its tongues,
That it will not endanger me with the fevers that have deposited themselves in it,
That all is clean forever and forever,
That the cool drink from the well tastes so good,
That blackberries are so flavorful and juicy,
That the fruits of the apple-orchard and the orange-orchard, that melons, grapes, peaches, plums, will
none of them poison me,
That when I recline on the grass I do not catch any disease,
Though probably every spear of grass rises out of what was once a catching disease.

Now I am terrified at the Earth, it is that calm and patient,
It grows such sweet things out of such corruptions,
It turns harmless and stainless on its axis, with such endless successions of diseas'd corpses,
It distills such exquisite winds out of such infused fetor,
It renews with such unwitting looks its prodigal, annual, sumptuous crops,
It gives such divine materials to men, and accepts such leavings from them at last.

The last stanza uproars the exploitation of man on Nature and hence Whitman ends his poem by saying, "It gives such divine materials to men, and accepts such leavings from them at last."

- **Experiencing Self-sufficiency in the lap of Nature**

Henry David Thoreau's account of a two-year stay in a cabin by Walden Pond describes an experiment in self-sufficiency and the cleansing effects of a simple life in the poem "Walden."

"Sympathy with the fluttering alder and poplar leaves almost takes away my breath ... Though it is now dark, the mind still blows and roars in the wood, the waves still dash."

VI. DEPICTION OF EXPLOITATION OF NATURE IN GREEN LITERATURE

Green writing is often contrasted with the literature of modern times and its devastation as it is depicted in the poem *The Wasteland* by T. S. Eliot. For Eliot the modern world of World War is the symbol of *The Burial of the Dead*, where *Datta* (Giving), *Dayadhvam* (Being Compassionate) and *Damyata* (Exercising Control) will give *Shantihi, ShantihiShantihi* to Man. Of the various themes, Eliot is talking about giving others, including Nature; Being compassionate with all including plants and animals surrounding, and Exercising control to exploit the surroundings is essential to stay in/with peace on earth.

Green teaching encourages students to understand why Nature has lost its beauty and vitality and to investigate how many changes have been occurred in the natural environment and to learn how to coexist with other creatures on this planet.

"The conceptual and practical problem is to find the grounds, upon which the two communities – the human, the natural – can coexist, cooperate and flourish in the biosphere." (Rueckert, 107)

- **Disturbed patterns of Seasons**

John Clare recalls how the seasons have lost their significance in the poem "Remembrances". He starts his poem with "Summer pleasures they are gone like to visions everyone/And the cloudy days of autumn and of winter cometh on/I tried to call them back but unbidden they are gone/Far away from heart and eye and forever far away" and so his heart which was so happy has become so sad, "With heart just like a feather- now as heavy as a stone". The poet recollects the activities of being with Nature with all its nuances when he was a child and laments as they now have become dry like a desert.

All leveled like a desert by the never weary plough
All vanished like the sun where that cloud is passing now
All settled here for ever on its brow"

The words of the poet like "I never thought that joys would run away from boys Or that boys would change their minds and forsake such summer joys... Till vanished was the morning spring and set that summer sun And winter fought her battle strife and won" explains the lost lustre of Nature in the environment and man. Though joy had left the paths of men and love went the common road with decay" the poet hopes to have spring after a long winter, thereby presenting the modern life with such precession.

- **Degeneration of Nature**

In the poem "This Compost", Walt Whitman expresses his fear and anxiety about the degeneration of Nature in various forms.

Something startles me where I thought I was safest,
I withdraw from the still woods I loved,
I will not go now on the pastures to walk,
I will not strip the clothes from my body to meet my lover the sea,
I will not touch my flesh to the earth as to other flesh to renew me.

- **Privatisation of collective land/urbanization**

Green teaching also helps in understanding complex environmental issues and encourages the students to take responsible actions for better environment with reduced harm to Nature. John Clare deals with 'the tragedy of the enclosures' i.e. mourning the privatisation of collective land in the poem "the Moors". In his lament for the effects of enclosure, he remembers an "unbounded" countryside.

"Bespread with rush and one eternal green". "Where swopt the plover in its pleasure free" there is now a fenced tract, where signs forbid entry.



- **Protest against agribusiness**

Green writing helps students understand how their actions affect the Nature, develops knowledge and skills necessary to address complex environmental issues, as well as the steps one can take to the Nature sustainable for the future.

In the poem *The Deserted Village*, Oliver Goldsmith protests against Georgian agribusiness. The poet recalls how the idyllic hamlet of Auburn has changed when the capitalists have moved in and so he writes, “Amidst thy bowers the tyrant’s hand is seen,/And Desolation saddens all thy green.” .

In the poem *Water*, Ralph Waldo Emerson warns that natural resources like water gives pleasure if treated properly and destroys if it is ill used.

The water understands
Civilization well;
It wets my foot, but prettily,
It chills my life, but wittily,
It is not disconcerted,
It is not broken-hearted:
Well used, it decketh joy,
Adorneth, doubleth joy:
Ill used, it will destroy,
In perfect time and measure
With a face of golden pleasure
Elegantly destroy.

There should be renewed interest among present generations to curb ill effects of human errors like wars and their associated climate change. During the war time, Sara Teasdale writes in the poem *There Will Come Soft Rains* that Nature becomes a silent spectator even if human race disappears from this planet.

There will come soft rains and the smell of the ground,
And swallows circling with their shimmering sound;
And frogs in the pools singing at night,
And wild plum trees in tremulous white,
Robins will wear their feathery fire
Whistling their whims on a low fence-wire
And not one will know of the war, not one
Will care at last when it is done.
Not one would mind, neither bird nor tree
If mankind perished utterly;
And Spring herself, when she woke at dawn,
Would scarcely know that we were gone.

The poem highlights the pointless and futile nature of war. The death of mankind changes nothing in the world. People are gone, but the natural world continues unaffected. This message also functions as a warning to the reader.

VII. CONCLUSION

At the core of the green literature is the appreciation of the beauty of Nature. Teaching of green writing to the ESL students reinforces their interest and curiosity for protecting Nature. In other words, teaching green writing has the chances of generating fruitful ideas to protect environment against exploitation even though it may appear meagre. The attempt to teach green writing to young students in itself contributes to the renewed interest and the need for preserving its beauty and eco balance. If not at higher level, students even voluntarily employ various techniques at least at personal levels it would be a contribution from their side to protect the Nature.



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