An Ecocritical Reading of D.H. Lawrence’s ‘Snake’ and Coleridge’s ‘The Ancient Mariner’

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Eco literature is an innovative perspective which insinuates eco conscious approaches and interpretations to literatures. The prerequisite of ecoconscious literature is to create awareness and signposts the environmental crisis and dichotomizes the inter relationship of literature and the environment. "Behind every book is a man, behind the man is the race are the natural and social environments whose influences is unconsciously reflected" (Mundra 38) In accordance to the quoted lines the literary artists are shouldered with the responsibility of remoulding and educating the people for whom they write. As the present age, encounters environmental crises, to bring an ecological education is mandatory. The objective of the paper is to create universal appeal and to apply eco critical insight to literary genres. Eco literature aims at infusing the ecocritical appreciation to literature.

In this context it would be apt to quote Kerridge, "eco criticism seeks to evaluate texts and ideas in terms of their coherence and usefulness as response to environmental crisis(Garrard 4)" As quoted the paper attempts to reread D.H. Lawrence’s poem ‘SNAKE’ and Coleridge’s. The ANCIENT MARINER in the vein of eco critical principles of bio criticism. An attempt is made to respond, move actively to promote environmental crisis. The cross section of these poems explicitly manifests that eco conscious literature tend to read the canonical text from earth centered approaches and promote teaching the environment. Rayon in the Anthropology ESSAY IN ECO CRITICISM entitled an essay "Towards the Green Revolution" has expressed that:

"cosmopolitan perspective have adversely affected the local literatures, values, religious and technologies. This has liberated the present generation from its environment particularly natural environment. One should know the flora, fauna, cultural distinction and traditional values of one’s own region to understand oneself. As pointed by Selvamony, "Education has to foster an ecologically sound interdependence among all life forms and a biotic aspects of the environment. (60)"

D. H. Lawrence, the prominent 20th century writers' SNAKE is a well written poem, invokes how human beings vision nature and also elucidates how man react to the fellow beings of this planet. It also unfolds the attitudes of the human beings, who can change his attitude and emotion in a period of time. The poem ’Snake’ can be reread in the ecological context because, the poem ’can be related to everyone’s lives”. The varying perspectives of the poem include interpreting the themes on closer examination of man’s affinity and enmity to nature, good and evil, fear and insecin. The poem picturises the beauty and elegance of the snake. The post-structural reading of the poem gives exclusive themes. It is about a snake trying to quench its thirst of sunny days at a man’s water trough. The man at first remains indifferent to the movements of the snake feels the company of the snake entertaining and fascinating, though the snake is harmless, in some corner of his mind, he gets the instinct to show hostility to the earth’s creature instead of hospitality. For a moment he becomes unpredictable and uncertain. He is torn between "accursed human education" and "humility". The "voice" in him created a rift for his fascination for the snake, and in a mood of conflict he tries to hurt the snake. The bashful attitude of the lyrical persona regrets for his mean act which he has done in a fit of fever of fear. He finds himself in the same position as the sailor of Coleridge’s, THE ANCIENT MARINER who regrets for killing the Albatross, like the sailor, he yearns to ‘expiate’ for his ‘pettiness’ towards the Snake.

This Poem can be ecocritically overviewed to portray ecoconcious concern of literature. The connotative meaning of the poem conveys simply the feeling of fear and repentence. The ecocritical interpretation manifests the destructive tendency and loss of humanitarianism towards the benevolent nature. In his search for knowledge man losses himself in the mire of modernism and negotiated to be a “nature friendly” companion. As this planet is the place for the “Survival of the fittest”, man, the supreme creation fails to harness and organise ecological imbalance and inequality in the universe. As quoted by Vandana Shiva in ECOFEMINISM man in the
sphere has forgotten that “For human life it means a new balance between taking and giving, between each one of us and other people, our people and other people, our species and the other species in Nature” (315). This is true in the case of the lyrical persona of the poem SNAKE, who merely fails to maintain a balance with the environment he shares. In spite of befriending a fellow creature of earth, in a paradoxical mood, the intriguing question of his conscience provokes him to react in humanly by throwing a log at the snake.

Futhermore, reading the poem in an ecological angle pictures the relation of nature and man. The corporate cosmopolitan societies has crushed man’s virtue and also tempt him to over power the omnipotence of nature. The eco critical parameter of the poem reveals that man desires to devour the territories of earth for his selfish satisfaction and remains neutral to the natural beings of the environment. The poem SNAKE is not just about the man’s attitude towards a snake, beyond that it projects “Mans voracious rage to conquer nature”. He also feels that he is superior to other forms that inhabit this biosphere. Bindu Annie Thomas in the Anthology ESSAY IN ECOCRITICISM writes:

“The spiritual and psychological union between man and nature, man
and beast was fractured beyond repair. Man now had to struggle for his
existence. His survival depended on his intellectual faculties with which
he sought to dominate the rest of the creation”. (182)

The broader eco critical investigation applied to this poem unearth the deterioration of man’s values and his secured feelings towards there creatures. Vandana Shiva in the article published in Deccan Chronicle titled “Green Freed” writes “The Universal values of human dignity and equality are being ruthlessly violated”. She is of the opinion that such loss of morality leads mankind to encounter unhealthy ecological catastrophe. At this context Lawrence SNAKE can be compared with W.W.W. Ross’s. THE SNAKE TRYING and A.K Ramanujam’s SNAKE. In both these poems the lyrical persona is in the same temper to do harm and destroy the snake. In all the poems relating to snake the habitat of the earth faces problem. The reason is “Nature suffers because of human misunderstanding of it”. The prime objective of the paper is to project the eco critical concepts in TRHE ANCIENT MARINE the description of nature is so abundant and beautiful. Its omnipotence and all pervading power are emphasised thought-out the poem. The readers of this phantom poetry will undoubtedly be haunted by the ghoulish atmosphere of nature just as the cursed Mariner. The inclination of the poet is to manifest the ‘beauty and peace envelop universe’ IF NATURE AND ITS CREATORS ARE undisturbed. Coleridge, the romantic poet loves nature with “all the glow of lover and enjoys her familiar and homelier aspects as well as when she is in a more wrathful mood”. Like a painter he has painted the myriads beauties of nature. Ecological examination of the poem unfolds that the natural landscapes are humanised. Ragbukul Tilak in “THE ANCIENT MARINER AND OTHER POEMS” summaries the affinity of nature and man thus:

“As Humphrey House points out, the killing of the albatross represents the
Violation of nature’s sanctity and it becomes the Christian emblem when it is
Hung round the Marines neck like a cross”.

In this context the poem remains Oscar Wilde short story THE SELFISH GIANT. The inhumane gaint’s treatment of the children makes his garden winter-struck, only when he showers love to God’s creation spring enters his garden. THE ANCIENT MARINER also emphasises that inhospitable towards a bird has made nature turn against him. Hence in the present scenario, preserving the ecology is pivotal in the Anthology ESSAY IN ECOCRITICISM Anand Amaladas writes:

“The depletion of the resources of nature is only an expression
of the depletion of human series and power of the soul, feelings,
dispositions, fantasy and the power of action”. (30)

In the both the poems SNAKE and THE ANCIENT MARINER the themes spin around the crime against the sanctified relation of guest and host. To concluded all organisms in the universe must accept “Biocentric equality”, equality of all things in the biosphere. As Devall says all organism have “an equal right to live and blossom and to reach their own individual forms of unfolding have “an equal right to live and blossom and to reach their own individual forms of unfolding and self realization within the larger self” (Devall 67) Russell
Sanders in his essay. *Speaking A Word For Nature expresses* “lack of ecological consciousness in our best sellers reflect an endemic myopia in our culture”, hence it is the responsibility of our profession to make literature “a purgative redemptive biosphere action”.

REFERENCES