



The Strong Green Thread of Literature

Dr.Rumania Ashraf

associate professor

govt.Collage for women nawakadal

We all are aware extensive misuse of natural resources has left us at environmental limits. Donald Worster explains “we are facing a global crises today not because how ecosystems function but rather because of how our ethical systems function.” Environmental problems today are global in scale and their solution will require worldwide collaboration. Educating people about environmental issues by scientific and technological means alone is insufficient more studies can be seen as a kind of introspection to help us figure out who we are what we believe in how we ought to treat our environment and other living things around us’.Literature being the representative of human behavior in nature plays a vital role in teaching us to value natural world .Neil Evernden argues that discoveries in ecology and cellular biology revolutionize our sense of self teaching as that “there is no such thing as individual only an individual-in-context no such thing as self only ‘self –in-place’ accordingly as it is literature does not float above life so it has its role to play via metaphor it helps us to feel the relatedness of self with place. In 1978 William Rueckett in his “Literature and Ecology ; An Experiment in Ecocriticism”.coins the term ecocriticism and does not simply mean nature study. It has distinguished itself from conventional nature writing first by its ethical stand and commitment to the natural world and then by making connections between the human and the nonhuman world. Ecocriticism gives emphasis on this ego-consciousness of man. Lawren Buell identifies two waves of ecocritics.The first wave of eco-critics focus on nature writing ,nature poetry and wilderness fiction with the aim to preserve ‘biotic community’ the ecocritics of this wave appraises the effects of culture upon nature with a view towards celebrating nature berating its dispoilers and reversing their harm through political action”.The second wave of ecocritics is inclined towards the environmental justice issues and a ‘social ecocriticism ‘that takes urban landscape as seriously as natural landscape’.It seeks to vestiges of nature in cities and exposes crimes of social injustice against societies marginal section.The result is a critique of how our culture devalues and degrades the natural world. The ecological concern is the subject of many Kashmiri writers the dreadful floods of 2014,the melting of glaciers the reducing size of DalLake and cutting of Chinars and Forests are grim reminders of ecological change of the region. The renowned poet and sufi saint Noorudin Noorani often quoted aphorism has become slogan of nature and the environment. “Food is subservient to forest” “ Ann posh teli yeli wan posh” .Using synecdoche of tree the poet warns people that till you will care for environment you will rejoice its benefits in different varieties and forms.He foresighted the importance of natural resources six hundred years ago. Ahsanulhaq in his paper writes to understand flora and fauna of Kashmir,it is incumbent upon all researchers ,scientists biologists and environmentalists to

carryout serious research on ecological and biological aspects of sheikh-ul-Alam studies .Poets like Aga Shahid Ali,Mehjoor,Abdul Ahad Azad,Dinanath Nadim and Rehman Rahi have written about natural phenomenon of Kashmir .Fictional writers like Mirza waheed,Shakoor Rather Basharat peer,Siddharatha Gigoo have recorded the fear and ecological crises emanating as bi-product of culture of Kashmir drawing our consciousness and bent on emphasizing the gravity of ecological situation .Literary fiction based approach has the potential to mobilize the readers to take appropriate actions to strengthen their bond with nature by identifying and contesting the ecocidal attitudes and forces.Shakoor Rather in his novel "Life in the clock Tower valley "reminds us of major project of great magnitude of filling of Nala Maar in 1970 when canal was converted into road followed by the 90ft road from Soura to Nagbal .The new road zigzagging through placid city could not have been matured without axing and creating depletion to the biodiversity and economy of the region in the name of progress .Novelist through protagonist of the novel who while commuting to University of Kashmir in local matador relates how an argument broke out over an article on the editorial page . Samar the protagonist of the novel managed to see a few old black –and-white pictures of Nalah Maar on the page that had caused the argument .The caption read ;"It is not Venice or Milan ;it is Kashmir of yore' nostalgia has stirred some old hearts who were now debating whether the author of the piece has done justice to the stream's lost charm. The old man ...said he was reminded of his first love affair on the banks of Nala maar and how his love and Nala Maar had fallen prey to the rust of time .Nala mar was a canal that often find mention in the legends Samar's grand father told him when he was a little boy growing up in shehr-e-khas .It used to run through old Srinagar and connected a Lagoon to the famous DalLake .The Stream was at its best during the reign of the 15th century that often found mention in the legends Samar's grand father told him when he was a little boy growing up in shere-e-khas.It used to run through old Srinagar and connected a lagoon to the famous Dal lake The stream was at its best during the reign of the 15th century king of Kashmir Zain-ul-Abidin also called 'Budshah'.It was considered to be city's lifeline .when snow melted at the start of spring,a stream of water would come down from the mountains and drain out through the canal.Nala Maar protected Kashmir even during great flood of 1903while the upper town including Amira kadal and other areas got inundated.Besides the Maar was an important business centre and an easy way of transportation. All vegetables grown in the areas around the dal would be transported through Nalah Maar to people of vicinity.Samar has seen images from archives that showed tourists flocking the canal with boatman offering them rides in the crystal-clear waters in doonga boats,floating past rows of Persian-style water front houses with flower beds." The canal was filled up in 1970's long before Samar was born,to pave the way for a road through the old city .It had proved to be an ecological disaster for Srinagar as it choked the lagoon and affected the entire water system of the city.How would the great king react if he saw the Maar todayor may be he already knows about the loss and is weeping in his grave .The old man next to samar said and sighed.As the matador drove on what was once the bank of Nala Maar ,the Muddy water was visible only in patches -the only reminder of those aquamarine waters with flowery banks and trout, a paradise for boatmen and their tourists. Amidst the road of gushing waters ,the fishermen would spread their nets to catch a few fish. But these scenes belong to a glorious past. Now orange –feet ducks with dirty beaks could be seen marching on a mission one following the tail of the other.The canal was choked with weeds ,rubble,mossy stones and construction debris.There were carcasses of dead animals and scrawny pye dogs and vultures feasting on them. Everyone in the matador covered their noses.(Pg22) On another instance in the novel the novelist reminds us " Like every other city,Srinagar too had mistakes on the hoardings all over .The error reminded Samar of the historical mistakes committed by successive rulers of Kashmir.Like the filling up of Nalah Maar to lay roads rather than reviving the canal (pg 23).This account of ecology and ethics show texts reflect how civilization

regards its natural heritage " The valley looks like a green sheet hung tenderly from the surrounding foot hills with a singing ,humming.....rivulet in the middle".through words and images questioning truth is inescapable as William Howarth in his essay 'Some principles of Ecocriticism' reiterates "Ecocriticism observes in nature and culture the ubiquity of signs, indicators of value that shape form and meaning Ecology leads us to recognize that life speaks, communing through encoded streams of information that have direction and purpose" if we learn to translate the message with fidelity" Mirza Waheed in his novel "Collaborator" idealizes the beauty of landscape .Waheed portrays the fragility of ecosystem of region in the face of social and political forces disturbing the relationship between Nature and people of the place .The narrator recounts his childhood experience how he celebrated nature "the moment you stepped on new ,untouched, fresh from dried dew grass and ran downhill for a few minutes....I liked long grass and floral designs-all over the place .They were far off, distant, almost unreal....and by the time we took off our clothes to splash about in the low and languid stream we had assumed full ownership of the place and didn't care who was and wasn't peering at us from some ugly checkpost out there on the mountainside .After swimming in the chilly water, we would lie down on the thick carpet of grass for ages looking at the really blue sky and conjuring up odd names for clouds and hung low over our valley before drifting to another one across the mountains (pg6) the graphic description reveals the close proximity of people to nature and environment the idea is reinforced by the novelist that rivers ,mountains ,streams stand for all nature of the region and the identity of its people .Narrator gives a parallel description in the novel how conflict has altered environment of Kashmir. "Bodies after bodies –some huddled together, others forlorn and lonesome-in various stages of decay .Wretched human remains lie on the green grass like cracked toys, teeth, shoes. For God knows how long I just cannot remove my eyes from this landscape, heaps of them, big and small, body parts ...Macabre horrid ghouls on either side of the brook watch me from my melancholic black-hole eye socketscarcasses with indefinable expressions on what remains of their faces –I hope I don't recognize anyone....The smell, the smell, the smell. I cannot begin to describe what it is like the first time. You just stop breathingthe stench is so powerful that your guts begin to pull your throat down, sort of strangle you from within" (pg8). The novelist shows how natural setting of Kashmir is threatened the ways that environmental violence approaches nature becomes a prelude to the disruption, destruction and erasure of its human and non human habitation. Novelists by taking careful observation reveals how Kashmir pays for brutality of humans and focuses our attention on dehumanization with a hope to pass on the knowledge about his land and people to younger generation. In his novel "The Book of Gold Leaves" the novelist shows how two lovers Rohi and Faiz are often lured by the 'murmurs of the river in the dark' (pg61). Two lovers are planning future taking landscapes as their refuge ." I will take you to all our lakes and rivers .I will float on the Jhelum with you by my side and we will see what lies beyond the shrine .We will go as far as the river courses through the heart of our country .I am sure ,no I know that the river and the field and the forest will give us shelter create heavens for our children and us in the years to come "(139). Waheed again in this novel offers insightful description of the relationship between people of Kashmir and nature by documenting the ecological devastation caused in the region. Later Faiz finds the same river desecrated "refuse from hospitals and dismembered body parts from some detention cell have become regular parts of the river leaving it full of filth and over-consumption ." This river made the city and the city has tried to unmake it over the centuries. While it brings the heavenly waters of the emerald Verinag spring from the hem of the Pir Panjal mountains, the city thwarts its dreams ,pouring refuse ,bad wishes and dark deeds of the oppressor." By textual signification fictional writers generate an eco-critical intimacy which enables readers to understand the deepest meanings of the land and makes readers appreciate the ways that individual and collective histories are inextricably tied to nature .A critic Buell believes

“environmentally oriented work/s/the non human environment is present not merely as a framing device but as a presence that begins to suggest that human history is implicated in natural history.(Buell). Fictional writers by showing pernicious implications of the process make it imperative to identify and examine the ways that environmental violent approach to nature becomes a prelude to the disruption ,distruction and erasure of its human and non human habitation.

1.Worster Donald .The Weath of Nature; Environmental History and Ecological Imagination .New york :Oxford University press,1993

2.Everden Neil The Social Creation of Nature Baltimore:johnsHopkins University press.1992 contemporary

Published by :Society for Human Ecology

<https://www.jstore.org/stable/24706854>

3.Rueckett William Literature and Ecology :An Experiment in Ecocriticism “Iowa Review 9.1(winter1978)

Buell, Lawrence .The Environmental Imagination :Thoreau,Nature Writing and Formation of American Culture .Cambridge.London.England.Harvard University Press,1995.

Nature and Environment in Shaikh-ul-Alam’s Poetry :An Eco-critical Reading

