



DYSTOPIAN LITERATURE: A TOOL OF REPRESENTATION FOR ECOLOGICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

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Abstract

This research paper focuses on the fundamental ecological issues prevailing on the society and a need for ecological consciousness which is represented through the dystopian literature. Dystopian fiction raises the awareness and ecological consciousness in the readers by presenting the dangers and impediments which can occur in the near future due to the negligence of human actions towards ecology and also to the environmental well being. Dystopian literature portrays the serious environmental issues such as increase in global temperature, dangers of overuse of technology, harmful effects of radiation, pollution, water and food shortages, lack of organic agriculture, overpopulation, and extinction of wildlife species, deforestation and many other issues which could have a massive impact on the lives of both nature and human beings on earth. Many concepts and theories arose like ecocriticism to emphasis the harmony and relationship between human beings and nature. In turn human beings serves as a root cause for the imbalance in the ecosystem and the dystopian novels serves as tool to how humans should be responsible for their action of inaction towards the environment. Thus dystopian literature and writers aims to raise ecological consciousness by imagining the worst case scenarios where the prevailing anthropocentric and ecological unconsciousness could lead to the extinction of the human civilization in the near future.

Keywords: Ecology, ecological consciousness, dystopian literature, ecocriticism, ecological crises, dystopian fictions.

Introduction

At the dawn of a new era, the world is being faced with many issues due to ecological degradation. The mounting ecological issues such as global warming, pollution, environmental degradation, deforestation and ocean acidification have a massive impact on the psychological and corporal well-being of the people. These issues are interrelated to various other crises that may arise in its interconnectedness. The role of humans is crucial in protecting nature and also in keeping together the harmony of living. Human beings serve as both the cause and effect of environmental protection and degradation, but humans forget that they are the sufferers at the end of the day. The role of dystopian literature is crucial in serving as a warning and sign to protect Mother Earth, which is necessary for the stable living of human beings ingrained with harmony and peace. Dystopian literature uncovers various and multiple ways in which life and the future could be affected by the current choices. Dystopian literature serves as a potential way to create awareness in people of the impending danger that could affect earth and society of the living beings on the planet.

Dystopian Literature

The origin of dystopian literature can be traced back to the French Revolution of 1789. It surged as a response to utopian fiction. The term utopian came into being in the mind of Sir Thomas Moore, who is the author of *Utopia*. Sir Thomas More used the word *utopia*, which means “no where.” The concept of ideal society by More created a rampant effect in the minds of people as a countereffect, and dystopian novels sprung as a response to those utopian fictions. The word dystopian came into public usage in the speech of John Stuart Mill in 1868. Dystopian fictions are meant to warn the readers of the precarious course that is being followed by human society. It puts forward humans' actions and inactions, which threaten the existence of human beings and other species on earth. A modern literary genre, the dystopia, was invented by Yevgeny Zamyatin in his novel *My (1924; We)*, which could be published only abroad. Like Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* and George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-four*, which are modeled on it, *We* describes a future socialist society that has turned out to be not perfect but inhuman.

Dystopian literature provides new perspectives on problematic political and social practices that are otherwise considered inevitable in society. The importance of dystopian fiction is that it is educational in nature. These kinds of dystopian societies show in clarity the worst possible scenarios that could be the outcome of human's choices and actions in the near future. As dystopian fiction roots its concern in ecological, global, and social issues, emphasising technological awareness serves as a warning to humans that may prevent the imagined dystopian society and its dehumanising situations from becoming a reality.

Ecology and Ecological Consciousness

Nature and literature are always intertwined to each other and its connections can be seen in various evident forms in the writings of the poets and novels across many cultures. The study of environment consciousness and Literature is an interdisciplinary study termed as “Ecocriticism”. In the last decades of the twentieth century, ecocriticism emerged as a new literary theory to reconsider the relationship of human

beings to the natural world. Ecology has a vital role in society, and it is the human web of connections. Ecocriticism is defined as the application of ecology and ecological concepts to the study of literature. Cheryll Glotfelty, the pioneer of ecocriticism, describes it as simply the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment. Ecocriticism deals with how environmental issues, cultural issues concerning the environment, and attitudes towards nature are presented and analyzed. This form of criticism has gained a lot of attention in recent years due to a higher social emphasis on environmental destruction and increased technology. Today, the theory of ecocriticism is broadened and attached to other social and humanitarian sciences.

Humans began to pay more and more attention to their external living environment at the end of the 19th century as a result of changes in nature. This led to a new way of looking at the relationship between humans, nature and ecological consciousness. Ecological consciousness is a unique idea that which depends on the common connection between all biology and human activities in nature, including itself. The viewpoint and theory of harmony between man and nature and the sum of emotions are reflected in it. Heartfelt writing lays the groundwork for the development of current environmental ideas by focusing on regular excellence, cherishing nature, and getting back to nature itself. Dystopian Literature brings out the concerns of nature in the biological sphere and also makes the human beings ecologically conscious.

Ecological Crises and Consciousness in Dystopian Literature

Ecological crises have taken a center stage in the world of today. These ecological crises are the result of a lack of ecological consciousness and also a heightened hope of taking nature and its realm for granted. The dystopian fictions introduce us to the world that represents, the problem that is currently taking place on earth. By showing a clear picture of crises such as climate change, global warming, pollution, population, water crises, technological advancements, extinction of species and many more, it creates an awareness and consciousness among the people to protect the nature and its abundance.

The ecological dystopian novels explore the genre of science fiction, and the famous dystopian novels of the contemporary age such as *Handmaid's Tale*, *Oryx and Crake (2003)*, *The Year of the Flood (2009)* and *MaddAddam (2013)* have spoken about the disastrous climate change, problems of infertility, pollution, and impacts of genetic engineering which had finally culminated into some apocalyptic event.

The air got too full, once, of chemicals, rays, radiation, the water swarmed with toxic molecules, all of that takes years to clean up, and meanwhile they creep into your body, camp out in your fatty cells. Who knows, your very flesh may be polluted, dirty as an oily beach, sure death to shore birds and unborn babies. (Atwood 118)

These lines bring out the effects of radiation and pollution. It is now becoming a reality of the contemporary world. The pollution in the cities keeps on escalating year by year and these fictions serve as prophetic visions for the future. The root cause of all these tribulations starts with the degradation of the environment, which is intertwined with all the other sources of human derangement.

The other works, like *The Wind from Nowhere* (1961), *The Drowned World* (1962), and *The Burning World* (1964), of the author J.G. Ballard describe the future where the solar ice capes have melted due to global warming and the harmful effects of industrial pollution. The novel of Octavia Butler, *The Parable of the Sower*, published in 1993 novel envisions the (presently extremely not so distant) eventual fate of 2025, where a world-wide temperature boost and contamination have led to the total obliteration of society. The world still exists. Be that as it may, between racial pressures, outrageous abundance imbalance, water and food deficiencies, and widespread illicit drug use, where the world nearly ends. These problems, which are portrayed in the novel will eventually make people think of the situation where, if an apocalypse happens, they will be faced by the same exact scenario. This consciousness of struggle and survival will bring awareness and ecological consciousness to people and dystopian literature becomes one of the tools for its representation. Fictions such as *Water Knife* by Paolo Bacigalupi and *Memory of Water* by Emmi Itäranta illustrate the issues of water crises and when the water becomes scarce people start to wage war against each other to attain water resources. When water is more precious than gold, associations shift like sand, and the only reality in the desert is that someone will have to hemorrhage if anyone hopes to drink. These scenarios inculcate a consciousness to protect and preserve the present water bodies and inhabitants should be ecologically conscious while using the resources that are available from nature and not taking it for granted in any realm of its existence. Thus, taking them for granted could lead to irreparable loss to human society as a whole and to the environment.

The dystopian fictions not only concentrate on ecological consciousness and degradation but also warn the reader about the impending danger of the overuse of technology. The post-apocalyptic era in the dystopian genre was influenced by technological development and mechanisms since the 1980s. Technology, such as computers, robots, and nanotechnology, was expanding the borders of living things, people, animals, and, in addition, some other living forms. Humans also show affinity for involving themselves with these technological inventions to make everything smarter and easier for the overall welfare of humanity to coexist. The people in society are forced to live with technology, and because they are surrounded by technology rather than human connections, it could have more negative impacts on both the mental and physical health of human beings and the environment. Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, which imagines a totalitarian, futuristic society that manipulates and psychologically and scientifically engineers its citizens, aims to convey that technology will not save humanity but rather be its downfall. It also explores the limits to which humankind will push science without crossing the line into immorality. The concept of an ideal society, in which everyone is treated equally on the outside, is put into question by one outsider; it is one of the examples of a technologically intervened futuristic society.

The concept of genetic engineering is present among many of the dystopian fictions that pose a clear and present danger. . In order to achieve a desired feature in an organism of a different species, genetic engineering may include introducing a gene from one species to that organism. Genetic engineering has been used in science and industry to create genetically modified plants and livestock, brew yeasts, produce cancer medicines, and more. Thomas Hunt Morgan's discovery in 1926 on the function of chromosomes in

inheritance might be considered the beginning of genetic engineering. Perhaps in 1953, when Rosalind Franklin and James Watson and Francis Crick revealed the DNA double helix structure. Dystopian literature shows how uncontrolled genetic engineering can destroy humanity and environment intentionally.

Genetic engineering can be useful in certain ways, but it is highly dangerous in many ways and the fiction also signifies the point to be aware of it. We may not have the technological capacity to intentionally produce a virus, microbe, or dangerous creature right now, but we will eventually acquire that ability. There is always a threat of biological weapons and also the act of bioterrorism in the world of dystopia. This may become reality in the near future if it is not controlled by human society. The Biological Weapons Convention, which forbids the use of poisons or disease-causing organisms to damage or kill people, animals, or plants, has been ratified by 185 nations to date. Signatory nations are obligated to regulate the conduct of businesses and research institutions within their purview. The society can hardly control other sort of weapons of mass destruction.

The society must take into consideration biological weapons more carefully, especially in light of our limited success in managing nuclear weapons. The present environment has been changed by even very basic biological engineering approaches. The one thing that has kept us safe so far about our superior engineering is its technical difficulties. It will grow more user-friendly. Dystopian and science fictions have always warned us that time is running out because even it's most fantastical concepts continue to come true. This might have an enormous impact on the harmony between humans and ecology. These thoughts of the writers highlight the need for ecological consciousness in the society for harmonious future.

Conclusion

Dystopian literature throughout the ages has emitted a prophetic vision for the future society. Though its settings may be dehumanising, the vision is an optimistic one that could lead human society to its betterment and a harmonious living along with nature. Dystopian fiction brings into light the current ecological crises and also demonstrates that only human conscious actions towards society and nature could be its only solution. Human society must come together to find a solution rather than being self-interested, and thus it will preserve and protect human bonds, beings, and also the very core of humanity in disguise. Earth and its ecosystem are the core factors in the inhabitation of the human race, and it's the responsibility of human beings to shelter and conserve them. Dystopian fiction warns people before anything worse could happen, which might harm the human race as a whole. Thus, dystopian literature serves as a tool of representation for the ecological consciousness of the present society, which emphasises being concerned selflessly with the environment and its resources for all the living beings residing on the planet Earth.

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