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TAGORE: THE ECO-LITERARY ARTIST AND BEYOND ECOLOGICAL INTERDISCIPLINARITY AND LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT

Science, technology, industrialization, and urbanization have all contributed to the considerable degradation of the natural environment humans rely on for existence. A severe ecological imbalance threatens human survival. The litany of current and coming disasters is making us aware of our planet's approaching demise, thanks to many human-caused environmental disasters that have no precedence in Earth's history. The diversity of the planet's dwindling species is a message to us to be conscious of the severity of this ecological disaster and take responsibility for easing and eradicating it. This study aims to portray Tagore as an eco-literary artist, expressing his strong opposition to human aggressiveness and genuine concern for preserving and restoring the ecological equilibrium. Furthermore, in light of the current global environmental deterioration or ecological degradation, ecocriticism, as a wave of "green" criticism, seeks and believes in a solution to the environmental crisis that would conserve the Earth's natural communities; eco-centric ideals.

Keywords: Ecocriticism, Green Thinking, Symbiotic Co-Existence, Tagore's Notion of 'Surplus' and Upanishads.

Introduction

Statement of the Problem

“Literature is a comprehensive essence of the intellectual life of a Nature.”

William Shakespeare

The Planet Earth appears restive. Human activities motivated by an attitude of rampant consumerism and unsustainable patterns of production and consumption have never been as inhumane and callous towards the environment as in the modern era of scientific and technological innovations. Man's greed attacks Nature and wounds Nature, backlashes on the human future. The environment has emerged as one of the vital contemporary issues we face. The foundations of global security are threatened. These trends are perilous but not inevitable. Earth's resources are finite, and there may be ecological limits to growth that will sooner rather than later be exceeded unless we alter our ways. The ecologists and environmentalists, the so-called 'shallow' ones, are primarily concerned with our treatment of the environment regarding the practical consequences for humans. They urge that the misuse of Nature will affect human beings adversely. The current ecological crisis caused by human arrogance towards the natural world legitimates its exploitation to satisfy the insatiable lust of human interests.

Human arrogance toward Nature rooted in anthropocentrism thus signifies

A way of thinking that regards humans as the source of all value claiming that human needs and interests are the highest. Anthropocentrism regards human beings as having an intrinsic value and rest of the Nature endowed with an instrumental value, deserving a moral consideration in that it enhances human well-being. Tagore, as a great visionary, denounced human aggression toward Nature. He was certainly not unaware of the alarming Original Article consequences of the technological exploitation and recognized the misuse of Nature as a terrible threat to human life. Contrary to this anthropocentric human attitude lies the bio-centric or eco-centric vision. Eco-centrism, or the modern precept of green thinking, rejects the human chauvinism of anthropocentrism and argues that all of Nature has an intrinsic value. Eco-centric objects to human chauvinism, not humans; instead, they inspire the human and the non-human co-existence to blossom and flourish equivocally in the same hemisphere. It promises self-realization through communion with Nature interpreted as a seamless whole. Only by resacralizing our perceptions of the natural world can we put the ecosystem far above the narrow range of human interests and learn to live harmoniously with the natural world, thereby averting ecological catastrophe. Tagore's primary concern for Nature or the environment is based on a different and non-utilitarian ground. While one may, of course, seek protection for the environment in the name of the human survival, one may, with equal significance, seek it, as Tagore does, because Nature and man are 'adapted' to one another in the ways that authenticate human beings as inseparably related to the flourishing of the natural world.



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Literature Review

The word 'Ecocriticism' is a green phenomenon dealing with men a part of nature, the impact of nature on human existence, a broader understanding of literature and environment along with a concern for the present-day issues of threat to wildlife and environmental issues. Ecocriticism is "a study of the relationship between literature and the environment conducted in a spirit of commitment to environmentalist praxis". 'Eco-criticism is an emerging critical theory and it studies the relationship between literature and physical environment. Nature poetry is not new to literature, but eco-criticism allows one to study a poem from a new perspective that is nature's perspective'. Though nature and environment drew the attention of writers of the entire world from the very beginning, the term 'Ecocriticism' was first introduced by William Rueckert in 1978 in his noteworthy essay named 'Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism'. Here he illustrated the interaction of environs in literature intensely. Later, Cheryl Glotfelty and Harold Fromm jointly brought out 'The Ecocriticism Reader' in 1960 that turned a broader and vivid perception on it.

Ecocriticism is the study of the relation between literature and physical environment, just as a 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 reading of texts as earth-centered approach to literary studies.

It is supposed with Peripatetic school in Greek that man is by nature a social animal. Confronting this idea on human beings, the eco-critics state that human beings are part and product of nature. Eco-critics defied the idea of 'Man is the measure of all things. Furthermore, numerous Greek philosophers also persuaded the relation of nature and human beings with different elements of the earth. Ancient Greek thinkers brilliantly assumed in the relation between life of the men, culture, and nature those they imitated in their writings. Case in point,

Thales believed it was water; Anaximander said it was a substance different from all other known substances, "infinite, eternal and ageless"; and Anaximenes claimed it was air. Atomism began with Leucippus and Democritus. Among the ancient schools, this approach is the closest to modern science: they believed that everything is composed of atoms, which are indestructible and physically indivisible. They were strict determinists, who believed that everything happens in accordance with natural laws and the universe, they said, has no purpose and is nothing more than a mixture of infinite atoms being shuffled and re-shuffled according to the indifferent rules of nature.

Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) was conscious about the nature in his art and works. In his works, he proved his devotion to nature. "Rabindranath Tagore's engagement with nature was a continuous motif in his poetry" (Majumdar). At the beginning of twenty centuries, he realized the inevitability of saving the earth from endangerment. Ancient Indian philosophy including Upanishadic Pantheism and Buddhism believed in the mutual correlation between man and climate. They also believed the love of animals and plants repercussion. Alike, Tagore also showed his deep affection from the heart to nature as his birth accountability on earth.

Tagore nature presented nature in diverse ways. Sometimes nature has drawn as a challenging entity to mankind, sometimes a dependable source where mankind find shelter, as a safety place to take rest, as a true companion, a nurturer, and as a teacher of lives' lesson so on and so forth. Being the nature poet, we find the lyrical touch in these stories. As a poet of nature, he could feel the pulse of nature and it is also revealed in these stories. So, the short stories of Tagore also through a flash of light on nature with a new identity as well a new significance of the worth of existence.

Tagore's deep-seated environmental concern

The most crucial distinction between the animal and man is that the animal is very nearly bound within the limits of its necessities. However, there is a vast excess of wealth in man's life, which gives him the freedom to be useless. This, however, does not certify that man is not bound by any necessities. Indeed, he has biological and other needs to be procured. However, there remains a remainder or 'surplus' in the human beings once their desires, needs, and satisfaction have been taken into account. All such reflections of human beings arise because they do not live by bread alone; they experience a sense of lack even after all their biological and material needs have been provided by technology. This feeling of lack of 'dissatisfaction' comes from the 'surplus' in human Nature, from the excess of 'wealth' in a human being's life, which constitutes his or her spiritual make-up. This spiritual component transcends the pragmatic need and the sphere of utility: "it extends beyond the reservation plots of our daily life." This 'surplus' or spiritual wealth indicates an aspect of human being, "a fund of emotional energy" which is 'useless' or 'superfluous' because it is not regulated by self-interest or practical ends. Of course, the question about such a spiritual aspect of human existence has been debated among philosophers. Tagore's notion of 'surplus' and his understanding of human spirituality can be best understood and appreciated without requiring controversial postulates such as God or Atman. Without committing ourselves to disputed metaphysical doctrines, we can concede that we have a need entirely different from our everyday practical needs, which aims to fulfil our creative urge and our capacity to reflect or



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appreciate. This need caters to our aesthetic sense development to compose poems, music and paintings, to enjoy or appreciate, in the words of Tagore, "a beautiful face, a poem, a song, a character, and a harmony of interrelated ideas".

Therefore, Tagore's idea of 'surplus' may be interpreted in these terms, not specifically theological ones. Elucidating reference from the above context helps to explain why Tagore remained so anxious to defend the natural environment against unnecessary tampering and intrusion. He was drawn towards Nature because its harmony evokes our aesthetic appreciation, giving us spiritual joy and thus fulfilling the demand of the 'surplus' or spiritual component in us. This substantiates the main reason for our genuine care for Nature and concern for its preservation. Thus, if one is sensitive to the touch of Nature and finds delight in it; if one is intent on a non-technological way of relating to it on, on what Heidegger terms 'dwelling' and Tagore 'home coming'; if one discovers one is being 'outside' in companionship with Nature, and if one experiences love and sympathy for the natural world, one cannot but be eager to protect it against the onslaught.

Tagore's love for Nature and his ecological consciousness might be regarded as an 'anthropocentric' one since he thinks that no account of the value of Nature can be isolated from all relations to human beings. For Tagore, to say that Nature has value must involve some reference to human beings to how they are affected by it. However, Tagore vehemently denies anything pernicious in conceding this human reference. It will only appear pernicious if this human reference is wrongly taken to mean that Nature since it has no absolute or independent value, matters only for its instrumental contribution to our pleasures. Tagore's 'anthropocentrism' does not entail any human-centered 'imperialism' or specialist 'chauvinism'. Nature resembles an organism of unlimited benevolence that makes no demands for subsistence and extends the products of its life activity generously, affords protection to all beings and offers shade even to a man restless, crimped and crushed under the wheels of his mundane existence. Tagore firmly insists on the relation of love as we enter into Nature in our aesthetic contemplation of it. Tagore claims that in this relation of love, we are intensely aware of "Nature not as an object either for independent enquiry or practical use, but as belonging to the expanded sphere of our being. Self-realization enables us to see ourselves as the part of Nature by identifying more closely with it, to the extent that the self becomes part of the other (Nature). The continuity of Nature and self-highlights that if the individual self is intrinsically valuable, then Nature must also have to be equally valuable. The holistic analysis of the nature-human relationship tends to develop the non-anthropocentric or eco-centric ethics inspiring us to nurture a higher ecological consciousness towards Nature. We have to be natural with Nature and humane to human society to survive. The injunction lies in developing harmony with Nature and not exploiting the resources of Nature for one's selfish purpose.

Discussion and Analysis

Eco-poets share their views on nature in different literary figures in their writings as well as directly make their readers concern about ecology by their proses. "In India as well, there is a great scope for practicing ecocriticism. Nature and literature have always shared a close relationship between the nature and social world in the works of poets and other writers down the ages in the Indian culture". Tagore was concern about nature in his writings in great lengths. He pointed the necessity and prominence of every natural element and the way of leading flowers in various poems. "Tagore's poems are mystic, philosophic in establishing relation of mankind with that of nature. He has a spiritual perception of nature in which he tries to locate man in a very mild position in a sweet association with rich ecology". Tagore deemed that the earth was very cruel, unruly, and uninhabitable in the very beginning which became habitable by the uppermost contribution of trees. Trees make our earth green and livable. In his poems, he illustrated the involvement of plants from the very beginning to contemporary time. "In the first phase of creation, the earth was rocky, infertile, and no signs of his compassion for the creature were revealed that day. Fire was burning all around, the earth was shaken' 'Another he writes, "O Tree, life- founder, you heard the sun Summon you from the dark womb of earth At your life's first weakening; your height Raised from rhythmless rock the first Hymn to the light; you brought feeling too harsh Impassive desert". Nature is assuredly linked with beauty. Nature is a symbol of beauty and pleasure. Violation of nature indicates a violation of beauty. Tagore believed that nature is a way of enjoying the beauty.

CONCLUSION

"Tagore was in strict opposition to the self- defeating nature of development activities, which cares little about nature, and the balance between man and the surrounding environment. He was very anxious about the unrestrained destruction of forest resources". Tagore was a man of modern mind as well as eco- intelligence. He acknowledged the advancements of the contemporary world. He advocated development but he was worried about the endangerment or destruction of nature by the name of progress. When he found any exploitation of nature, he revolted against it by his literary works. He expected modern technology should be helpful to both man and nature equally. He provoked readers for maintaining ecological equilibrium. So, Tagore claim the title 'Forefather of modern conscious writers' for his contribution to respective fields. "Gaiatheory, which recognizes the earth as a living, conscious organism, introduced an ethical component into colonial and contemporary uses of the environment, calling into question the objectification necessary for abuse of the natural world". Tagore thinks that it is not possible to live being isolated from the common flaw of nature. Man-nature relationships and



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responsive bonds are required for the survival of human beings. To Tagore, man is merely an organ of the universe. “Man cannot be separated from the universe. He is more than a body of flesh and blood and his greatest body is in the universe”.

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