



Eco-consciousness In The Novels Of Thomas Hardy

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Abstract: *How much it is ridiculous that we claim to be civilized by connecting ourselves with cities, the forests of skyscrapers, where there is no sign of natural world. Today, we are forgetting our relation with nature. At one side, we discuss on Bio-diversity and how to save our planet i.e. Earth, where we are born but another side we are going to be far away from the nature, which is a symbol of reality and plays a role of our teacher and guardian. Nature provides us not only food but each and every thing that is needed for a life.*

An ecological consciousness is a way of being that respects the natural world like plants, trees, animals, insects and other creatures. In general terms, the ecological consciousness is understood as a reflection of the psyche of a variety of man's relationship with nature. According to Oxford Learner's Dictionary, Ecology is 'the relation of plants and living creatures to each other and to their environment'. In other words, Ecology explains the interconnection of human beings with natural environment. William Wordsworth is of the view that nature is not the stage, where men and women act the drama of their lives but it flows in our veins and rises to a passionate veneration, that is love and religion too. Nature is not only a procession of seasons and seasonal fruition, it is the eye of all things-natural and supernatural into which the observant soul can peer and behold the spirit that inhabits all things.

Key Words: Ridiculous, Claim, ourselves, forests, skyscrapers, natural world, relation, earth.

This ecological consciousness came into the mind of W.B. Yeats when he wants to go to "The Lake Isle of Innisfree", escaping himself from hustle and bustle life of London. Now it has become the matter of debate as well as requirement of human life too. This interest in the environment of our planet has given birth to eco-criticism, a thriving and contentious academic field within literary studies. This subfield has investigated a relationship between human beings and environment and produced influential work from medieval studies to post modern and contemporary literary studies. Perhaps William Rueckert was the first person who used the term eco-criticism in his essay entitled "Literature And Ecology" in 1978. According to him, eco-criticism is seeking the ways in which how environment is involved in literature and proposes possible solutions concerning our contemporary environment situation. After a long time, once again

man has understood the importance of nature in his life and he is applying a long established rustic orders which are giving a direction to the industrial capitalism and a big empire of technology.

Nature is only the place where human action and behavior are flourished spontaneously. When man moved towards city and saw a colourful life, his eyes flashed and he forgot his country life where he spent his childhood. But after some times when he got tired and felt suffocation from city life, a literature arose in which the loveliness and the benignity of the green earth were exalted¹. In the era of extraordinary industrial expansion, nature became one of the major subjects in literature because it provided peace and freshness to all, apart from the hustle and bustle life of cities which was fully suffocated. The description of nature was not found only in Romantic age but in Victorian age as well as in Modern age too. If we see the history fo



English literature through the eyes of ecology, we find the number of writers who have given an ecological touch to their literary works. They understood the importance and use of Nature in human life and delineated it beautifully in their writings. At one side William Wordsworth spiritualized nature and made her a moral teacher, another side Thomas Hardy made nature his companion.

Nature plays a vital role in the novels of Thomas Hardy. It is present there as a leading character. Hardy vividly and skillfully described his vision for the rustic nature of England. He lays stress to the intrinsic values of nature where men establish a harmonious relationship with their environment. He painted the woods, downs, meadows, heaths, and valleys in a new and most impressive light. Charles Duffin points out, 'If world picture could be hung on a wall, a great gallery could be filled with Hardy's nature pieces'. Basically Hardy was novelist but he loved nature like a poet. As Wordsworth delineates nature in his poetry, Hardy also describes nature in his novels. The stories of his novels move around nature and show his deep interest in it.

Hardy revealed a sympathy between man and nature. He was deeply attached with his native place "Wessex" and its natural scenes and he shows a profound feeling for it. 'The use of nature as a moral norm carries with it several important implications. If nature is a moral norm, then the cosmic order of things must be providentially arranged, must be an ethical as well as a physical process. In an astonishing display of compartmentalization, Hardy uses nature as a moral norm and at the same time, regards nature as a moral'2.

Hardy inter-related nature in his own way. Without understanding his treatment of nature, it is difficult to understand his characters as well as theme of his novels. Nature is not looking same in all his novels. In some of the novels, it is in role of a character but in another it is a background against the human drama. Nature runs with the mood and

feelings of characters because Hardy believes that man is a part of nature. According to him, Nature is beautiful but cruel and capricious. It dominates all the characters. In this regard, David Cecil comments, "Hardy recorded nature primarily in its relation to the life of man. Human life, therefore, is an essential feature in his picture of the natural world."3 In 'Tess of D'urbervilles' nature works according to mood of the central character 'Tess'. Here nature is looking happy and in jolly mood when the novel starts with the early life of Tess in Talbothays Dairy. 'But as Tess enters the region of misfortunes, natural background also becomes very sad and somber. The setting where 'Tess' is arrested, is just in correspond with her inner feelings of hopelessness'4. The band of silver paleness along the east zone made even the distant parts of the great plain appear dark and queer and the whole engrams landscape here the impress of reserve tactility and hesitation which is usual just before the day.'5

Hardy first famous novel 'Far From The Madding Crowd' is a very beautiful painting of Nature. The setting, charaters, scenes and story move around the nature. In this novel, Hardy has painted the life of the agricultural district of south western country 'Dorsetshire' and its farming and all features of rural life. This can be seen through this passage-

"The sky was clear- remarkable clear and the twinkling of all the stars seemed to be but throbs of one body, timed by a common pulse. The north star was directly in the wind's eye".6

The title of this novel shows Hardy's interest in nature because madding crowd symbolizes the busy life of cities. Literally the meaning of this title is call for retiring to the lap of nature from the suffocated industrial environment of cities. His ecological consciousness can be seen in these lines-

"Apparently there was to be a thunder storm and afterwards a cold continuous rain. The creeping things seemed to know all about the later



rain but little of the interpolated thunder storm whilst the sheep knew all about the thunder storm and nothing of the later rain".⁷

Hardy used Nature as a symbol of impersonal forces of fate which shows mankind in conflict. In his novels-'The Woodlanders' and 'The Return of The Native', The setting has a symbolic value and is made to stand for the universe. Hardy saw nature through poet's eye and delineated it like a painter. He has a keen ecological insight which can be seen in his novel 'The Mayor of Casterbridge'- "To birds of the more soaring kind Casterbridge must have appeared on this fine evening as a mosaic work of subdued reds browns greys and crystals held together by a rectangular frame of deep green".⁸

As William Wordsworth is called 'The poet of nature', Hardy can be called 'The novelist of nature.' He is at his best when he describes nature. One comes across many poetic passages of supreme beauty which deal with the idyllic grandeur of nature.⁹ His ecological consciousness is beautifully described in these lines-

"It was just in the dawn and the chilling tone of the sky was reflected in her cold wet face. The whole wood deemed to be a house of death, pervaded by loss to its uttermost length and breadth".¹⁰

Thus Hardy has vividly represented not only natural ecology but also social ecology as well as spiritual ecology. He has described these three elements and their relationship from the perspective of eco-criticism in their novels. In the blind race of materialism, man is forgetting the importance of nature from his life. Due to global environmental

crisis, man again raises the question of maintaining the global eco-system, In such condition, the novels of Hardy inspire people's attention to environmental protection. Today when the economic globalization process is growing fastly and making a crisis of human survival. Hardy's novels remind us about rural and idyllic life where man lived in harmony and he was free from all the anxiety of mechanical life. Therefore, we can say without any hesitation that novels of Thomas Hardy are the manifestation of his ecological consciousness and they teach the lesson of ecology to save the humanity as well as biodiversity.

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