

Ecocritical Analysis of Raksha Bharadia's *Alchemy of Nature*

Dr. Rajendra Jane

Principal, Arts and Commerce College, Bhis.

Abstract:

The practice of literary theory became prominent in the nineteenth century. Literary theory is an organized study and analysis of literature with application of some principles and methods. Since time immemorial nature has been the integral part of literature, many prominent poets and writers of every age have glorified nature and its other aspects in their works. However, the issues like degradation of nature under the name of development and modernity, ecological imbalance became the subject of serious concern for the literary artists very recently. This new way of judging literature and manifestation of nature in literature gave birth to novel approach in the field of literary theory, which is known as ecocriticism. The term ecocriticism or ecocritic is made of two words, eco and critic. These two words have been derived from Greek words oikos and kritic meaning house judge. Here, we can take house for surroundings or environment in which we live and the word judge for a person who examines the quality of environment, factors responsible for its degradation and suggests some remedies to rectify the damage done. In this paper the scholar aims to analyse Raksha Bharadia's write-up on nature titled as *Alchemy of Nature* with an ecocritical point of view to analyse a role of nature as a motivating force for human beings and explaining the bond between nature and a man.

Keywords: Literature, nature, ecocriticism, motivation, perseverance.

Introduction:

Ecocriticism aims to evaluate the literary piece to find out its concern for environment and writer's perspective towards nature. In ecocriticism critics analyse the story, poem or novel and bring out the connect between literature and nature. This critical method initiated in the USA in the late 1980s and in the UK in the early 1990s. Cheryll Glotfelty along with Harold Fromm edited the book containing essays on the themes of green studies or ecocriticism entitled, *The Ecocritical Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* in 1996. The term ecocriticism is said to be first used by William Rueckert in his essay *Literature and ecology: an experiment in ecocriticism* in 1978. Ecocriticism takes inspiration from the great American nature writers, Ralf Waldo Emerson, Margaret Fuller and Henry David Thoreau, they are popularly known as transcendentalists. R. W. Emerson's long essay titled *Nature* published in 1836 celebrates the divine facet of the nature, he says that people have gone far away from the nature in the pursuit of material pleasure but nature still fulfills their needs and, in this way, there is a strong bond between man and nature. Margaret Fuller's book *Summer on the Lake, in 1843* is a remarkable travel narrative in which Margaret differentiates between the materialistic motives of the colonizers and spiritual intentions of the tourists. She contemplates that, this materialistic societies have lost their connect with the pure laws of nature and their activities have become immoral. Thoreau's *Walden* is a reflection on his humble two-year stay around the natural surroundings of Walden Pond. "It is perhaps, the classic account of dropping out of modern life and seeking to renew the self by a 'return to nature'...These three books can be seen as the foundation works of American 'ecocentred' writing".

Cheryll Glotfelty in this book describes ecocriticism as, "The study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment. Just as 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 text, ecocriticism takes an earth centered approach to literary studies". The relation between literature and nature is significantly longstanding but conscious efforts to judge the work of art in relation to environment started in twentieth century. Recently, climate change due to human activity and its implication on human lives have become prominent themes in literature. Ecocriticism is a broad viewpoint encompassing fields like environmentalism, ecology, ecocriticism, ecofeminism, ecopoetics and so on. Poems have also been composed on the themes of environment degradation and its relation with life of man.

Alchemy of Nature: An Ecocritical Analysis

Recently I came across the lesson prescribed to standard X by Maharashtra State Bureau of Textbook Production and Curriculum Research Pune. The lesson titled *Alchemy of Nature* written by Raksha Bharadia describes Nature as a great teacher having a mysterious power to change ordinary objects into magnificence. Modern world has been confronting with the threat of global warming, increased

pollution and its dreadful effects on the life of human beings, there needs to be a shift in the outlook of human beings towards nature. Nature is not something that we are entitled to exploit it as we please, rather it is a magic house where mysterious activities take place continuously containing the messages for humankind and tell us that there is a give-and-take relationship between the two as Glotfelty states that nature is not just a stage of the playhouse upon which story of our life is performed but it is one of the actors in the play. This role of nature in our life suggests that our life is inconceivable without it. According to article published in *Research Guide* "...eco-critics takes nature as a dominant factor as they believe that our evolution as a society is largely dependent on the forces of nature". Raksha Bharadia states that even the small hibiscus plant teaches us how to live our life to the fullest, irrespective of the short period that we are blessed with. Every object in nature has association with human lives.

She further writes about the hard rocks which is sculpted and shaped by the continuous flow of water. It teaches us to be persistent in the pursuit of our goal, modern world has become oblivious about the greatest gift of patience, everyone wants to be successful in a short period of time, if fail, either commits suicide or take weapons in hands to vent their frustration. This lesson has a deep ecological value, author has shown that there is intense relationship between activities of nature and activities of man, some follies of human nature can be rectified by observing and implementing them in our life.

The word Alchemy basically is a form of chemistry, which is used to convert base metals into gold, however, the author uses this word in the context of mysterious or magical power of nature that can change things. As Glen A. Love says, "Teaching and studying literature without reference to the natural conditions of the world and the basic ecological principles that underlie all life seems increasingly short sighted, incongruous". Similarly, Raksha Bharadia claims that nature has mysterious power to relax, soothe, enrich our health, fulfil our desire and motivate. Trees in winter season are bare of all leaves, still they are in peace, without complaining, they accept the situation and wait for the proper time and within a period of three months once again appear before us with fresh leaves, colourful butterflies, birds, flowers and fruits. Nature motivates us to be peaceful at the time of adversity. It teaches us the age-old belief that nothing is permanent whether pleasure or pain. Author believes that nature shapes our mind and feelings, it inspires us to live our life confidently and meaningfully.

Author has given the example of ants pulling a fly almost ten times of their size to long distance telling us the importance of organised efforts, teamwork and perseverance. A rainbow embellishes whole sky, Oysters embrace a grain of sand and open up with a beautiful pearl. Water, even having capacity to give life to others, without any ego, take a form according to command given by the sun and the wind. All these natural activities teach us that man is also a part of nature and whatever happens in nature is directly connected to humans, there is a subtle bond between natural world and human world as Sandip Mishra says, "ecocriticism 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 the connection between the human and the non-human world". *Alchemy of Nature* makes us aware of the wisdom concealed in the common activities in nature by which human beings can make their life happy and peaceful. So, it is essential to preserve and worship nature and all the elements in it either living or non-living not only for the environmental cause but to develop positive mindset as well.

Conclusion:

In this way Raksha Bharadia represented the fundamental truths of human existence through various activities performed by nature and its constituents. Here nature has been depicted as a guide to man which tells him how to live his life productively without harbouring any sort of ill-will against others. As nature doesn't interfere in the affairs of others, man too has no right to interfere in the affairs of nature. This write-up by Raksha Bharadia essentially authenticates the interrelationship between man and nature. In concluding lines, she assertively advises us to experience this alchemy of nature and imbibe these natural laws to transform our base life into golden one. In short, ecocritical point of view, this write-up tells us to admire nature and everything that surrounds it because nature inspires and creates harmony in our life.

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