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Modernisation At The Expense Of Nature Exploitation: An Ecocritical Analysis of the God  
of Small Things

The literature is the most effective medium to mirror the contemporary society. Many authors creatively used nature as the setting of their works, and treat nature as an important part of human lives. The strong bond between the nature and society efficaciously caught the attention of the literary critics and environmentalists. Now-a-days Ecology and Ecocriticism became the noteworthy tool for literary researches. Environmental analysis is the need of present time, as people getting aware of environment. Therefore, these days numerous plans and schemes are being launched by the government and other organisations to make people environment conscious. At present protection of environment becomes the issue of much importance as we are facing global crisis. My paper seeks to outline eco-critical investigation to the application and the exploitation of nature in the name of civilisation and advancement in the booker prize winning fiction The God of Small Things authored by Arundhati Roy. Many

Indian writers have concentrated their consideration on the significance of eco-balance and environmental equilibrium and promote the sensible co-relation between nature and mankind.

A critical mode that investigates at the representation of natural landscape in any literary text is Ecocriticism. It pays specific consideration to nature and the rhetoric engaged when depicting nature. "It aligns itself with ecological activism and social theory with the assumption that the rhetoric of cultural text reflects and informs material practices towards the environment, while seeking to increase awareness about it and linking itself with other ecological sciences and approaches."(Pramod K. Nayar 242).

An acknowledged originator of Ecocritics in United States of America Cheryll Glotfelty provided a basic definition in an early anthology *The Ecocriticism Reader* : "Simply put, ecocriticism is the study of relationship between nature 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 texts, ecocriticism takes an earth- centred approach to literary studies." (1996: XVII).

With assured brief exclusions, *The God of Small Things* for the most part takes place in a town called Ayemenem, in Kerala, India. It has a non-linear plot and jumps back and forth in time between 1969 and 1993. These jumps in time are just as imperative in building the setting of the novel as the geographic space is. The nonlinear plot provides novel a unique style. Arundhti Roy so beautifully blends the characters with nature that they complement one another. Roy depicted the ecological exploitation of nature for sake of advancement and benefit of human being. Novel gives description of nature exploitation but simultaneously Velutha stands for sustainable development. The river Meenanchal designated as,

"It was warm, the water green like reapplied silk. With fish in it. With the sky and trees in it. And at night, the broken yellow moon in it."(123).

But after twenty three years when Rahel returns to Ayemenem River, “With a ghastly skull’s smile, with holes where teeth had been, and a limp hand raised from a hospital bed.”(124).

In the way of advancement the river had been sacrificed by the lobby of persuasive paddy-formers in interchange of votes so that they may have two crops in year instead of one. In spite of raining season it appears no more than swollen drain, a thin ribbon of thick water. The river which was formerly a lifeline now turns out to be helpless itself.

“Once it had had the power to evoke fear. To change lives, but now its teeth were drawn, its spirit spent. It was just a slow, sludging green ribbon that ferried fetid garbage to the sea. Bright plastic bags blew across its viscous, weedy surface like subtropical flying flowers.”(124).

The river got polluted by excretion by children living in huts on the other side of the river. The river poisoned by the pour of factory leftovers and washing of clothes and pots by women. In summer when the river dried out it sensed of rotten dirt which lifted off the river and hovered over Ayemenem like a hot cloud. The novel demonstrates how normal habitat is interrupted by enlargement in population which has grown in size .The growing population confirms a direct connection as more force on natural resources and their exploitation. It leads in loss, the serenity and attractiveness which plants, river and marshes contributed twenty three years earlier has been vanished. The village had been developed to the extent of a little town with enlarged population. Estha used to paced all over Ayemenem he observed the river as;

“Some days he walked along the banks of the river that smelled of shit, and pesticides bought with World Bank loan. Most of the fish had died. The ones that survived suffered from fin-rot and had broken out in boils.”(13).

Urbanization in novel described as, “small fish appeared in the puddles that fill the PWD potholes on the highways.”(1).

The estate of Karri Saipu had been changed in a hotel Heritage earlier known as History House. the brochures said the locality as “God’s Own Country”. Though it is described as,

“The view from the hotel was beautiful, but here too the water was thick and toxic. No swimming signs had been put up in stylish calligraphy. They had built a wall to the screen off slum and prevent it from encroaching on Kari Saipu’s estate. There wasn’t much they could do about the smell... The trees were still green, the sky still blue, which counted for something. So they went ahead and plugged their smelly paradise.”(125).

Through *The God of Small Things* Roy tries to depict the exploitation of nature in the process of modernisation and satisfy the human greed. Through Rahel Roy compares the nature in Ayemenem which was before twenty three years and now. Velutha is presented as the God of small things in the novel he is the man of nature. He is sincere towards nature makes small things from wood and other materials he gained from it and mould it fit for use. He was pronounced as ensuring outstanding talent with his hands. He is like a magician who can make diverse stuffs with the things we acquire from nature:

“tiny wind mills, rattles, minute jewels boxes out of dried palm reeds; he could carve perfect boats out of tapioca stems and figurines on cashew nuts.” (74).

The novel also gives the description of harmful effects of modernisation on animals as well. A temple elephant dies due to falling of a high tension electric wire on him. Roy tries to show that electricity becomes the integral part of our daily life but may cause harm to animals if they come in contact accidentally.

Nature has been depicted through trees, river, insects, and animals in the novel. Growth of population leads to exploitation of nature to fulfil our needs. Concluding my paper with the message, the loans provided by World Bank for development are resulting in ecological damage and destroying biodiversity in name of progress. Through the character of Velutha Roy suggested that we should have sustainable development. We should take up only that extent

from the nature that can be regenerated itself for future needs and help in human survival. It is needed to pay our attention to this increasing degradation and exploitation. Gradually the earth which was previously known as nurturing and life giving, is now appears pathetic. For the sake of our shelter giving planet we should revere the mother earth.

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