

Plants and Literature

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Plants and human life have a deep and long lasting connection. Rather long ages back, before the birth of civilization, human life was entirely surrounded by flora and fauna and depended on them. Gradually with the passage of time as man acquired knowledge, he came to know about farming, change of seasons, cooking of food and other inventions in the field of science. But his first and foremost relationship has been with nature. Prior to idol worshipping, people used to worship natural objects sea, rivers and trees to remain connected with and have the blessings of them. The greatest worshipper of nature, William Wordsworth spoke very high of nature. His perception of nature was spiritual and intuitive. In his famous poem “The World is too much with us” he wishes to be

“ A Pagan suckled in a creed out worn;
So might I, standing in this pleasant lea,

Have glimpses that would make ; me less forlorn, (Wordsworth 44)

Wordsworth in these lines conveys the idea that he wants to have his lost relation with nature back by taking shelter of Paganism and leaving Christianity. Indeed, flowers or other plants whether they are indoor or outdoor, their company increases concentration and memory. Nature imbibes calming, influence as Wordsworth says in ‘Daffodils’

“For oft, when on my couch I lie

In vacant or in pensive mood,

They flash upon that inward eye

which is the bless of solitude;

And then my heart with pleasure fills,

And dances with the daffodils’

Rabindernath Tagore, the great sage also believed that one who plants trees, knows the fact that he will never sit in their shade, has started to understand the meaning of life. This noble saint perceived nature as an indispensable part of human environment. There is also a fact that all humans are actually susceptible to the illusion of truth effect which means the more we hear something; the more we believe it’s true. Noteworthy is the perception of Nature by APJ Abdul Kalam Ji, in his Poem ‘ My Garden Smiles’

“The Scene was indeed rare celebration
Of heavenly bodies and roses of earth
I looked above and roses of my garden,
I looked above saw, the Milkway,
I looked around the garden,
Roses, roses and roses,
This unique festival of lights and beauty
Why, why, why, this unique scene,
This graceful event
In my garden first time,
My garden smiles,”

Really there is a beautiful fusion of heavenly and earthly natural beauties. A Scientist looking at the heavenly objects with spectacles of nature.

Robert Frost has been one of the most eminent Twentieth Century poets, who has got four Pulitzer prizes to his credits. His poetry unfolds him a great poet of Nature Man and Modernity. Robert Frost finds lessons in the phenomena of native and small and common occurrences in nature become for him occasion to reflect on the deeper meaning of life. Here it is pertinent to note that this poet does not always idealize nature but can see nature in its angry mood. In ‘Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening,’ the captivating sight of snowy woods leads him to make the observation that is very much real.

“ Woods are lovely, dark and deep
I have promises to keep
And miles to go before I sleep
And miles to go before sleep.”

This deep reflection on the solid realities of life cannot make forget the fact that though the person had miles to go yet the beautiful scene could not have but rejuvenated him.

The literature by the romantics focuses on the possibilities of a harmonious relationship with environment. The age of naturalists redefines the relationship of people and environment viewing the changes that were produced by increasing industrialization. Indeed this literature explores that mechanistic forces dominate individuals. The contemporary writings show concern with rapidly disappearing nature of world and loss of humanitarian attitude.

Relation of plants to nature and human life is indistinguishable. They work as a kind of bridge between the two. Impact of nature on human life via plants and effect of human activities on nature is co-relative. Imbalance comes in the lives of both whenever there is excessive use of any of the two. For materialistic gains man has been exploiting nature without any limits. For this he has been facing challenges and incurable diseases due to the rage of nature. This shows both aspects of nature-benevolent and malevolent. This is a well known fact and indeed understatement to say that Man and Nature are complementary to each other. And to say that the world of plants an organic part of nature, is a manifestation of God himself, is

simply to state the obvious. There is no dearth of writers who have brought this reality to the fore. The need of the hour is not only to realize the relevance of William Wordsworth's utterance

“ To me the meanest flower that blows can give thoughts that lie too deep for tears “

But also to apprehend the gravity of the situation, depicted in Coleridge's words (used in a different, context), if there is

“ water, water every where
But not a drop to drink.”

The idea behind the lines is that nature gives us the required essentials in plenty, but still there remains a threat to the human life.

Gardening is really a nice resource to uplift declining ecology and strength. The idea of gardening in literature is not only becoming popular but also reinforces the strong bond between woman and mother earth. Gardening enjoys wonderful status as it is not only a fine physical exercise but also a great stress reliever. It also produces the feelings of compassion and sympathy. It removes away the feelings of boredom and loneliness of life. In the modern times when parents are left alone at home and children study or do job at distant places, they love to spend their time with plants and pets. Prominent in this regard is the concept of kitchen garden especially in the urban areas. It serves as the main feature of an aesthetic landscape although it is a humble vegetable plot. This type of gardening not only contributes to fresh food items but also emotional well being of the family members especially women. One is at once reminded of a powerful female character 'Rukmani' created by Kamala Markandey in her novel 'Nectar in a sieve'. This character epitomizes emotional fulfilment that a lady receives after doing such sort of work. It is true to say that the attained positivity from plants influences social, psychological, emotive, physical and spiritual quality of human life. In an article published in 2011, Hall and Dickson discuss social well being of people and economic of environmental benefits associated with interaction says that it has been found that the more people remain busy with gardens, the fewer incidents of stress they suffer. Even severe illness comes to an end when one is in contact with nature. This brings positive outlook and life and people get alive and active. Prominent in this regard is the story 'The last leaf' by O' Henry. The last leaf portrays Johnsy, a poor young woman who is ill with pneumonia. She believes that when the ivy vine on the wall outside her window loses all its leaves, she will also die. But the neighbour Behrman, an artist saves her life by painting the leaf on the vine. This makes Johnsy realize,

“ The loneliest thing in all the World is a soul when it is making ready to go on its mysterious for journey”.

“ Something has made the last leaf stay there to show me how wicked I was. It is a sin to want to die.”

Really crucial and critical diseases disappear with the help of meditation in the lap of nature and feelings of oneness with nature.

4 The very feeling of oneness with nature that led the eminent scientist Jagdish Chander Bose acclaimed and proved about the sensitivity of plants' In the 'Wounded plants', an excerpt from his lecture at the Bose institute on Feb 17, 1919. He pointed out that we are immune to the sufferings and pain of the plants. They bear feelings of happiness, sadness, birth, growth of death as we do. Bose sensitises us to thee

biosphere by challenging our hostile attitude towards plants and other aspects of nature. In this essay the writer remarks about a leaf that was cut off from the parent **plant**.

“A leaf of Mimose was cut off from the plant, and the subsequent histories of the wounded, plant and the detached leaf are curiously different. The cutting of one of its leaves had caused a great shock to the parent plant. The detached leaf, when placed in a solution soon recovered and holds up its head with an attitude indicative of defiance, and the responses it gives are energetic. This lasts for twenty four hours”.

5 It was scientifically proved that it is a matter of minute observation that plants have psychology, attitudes and sensitivity as human beings have. It just needs behaviour of respect, sympathy and indebtedness to the world of nature.

Plants help man in every way physically, emotionally, spiritual and geographically. They offer important services to the author. They provide them scene setting to give the impression of time and place. They work as metaphor and symbol in many ways. At once come to mind the idea of the poem ‘Birches’ by Robert Frost. The trees enjoy ambiguous image that is life, death and rebirth. Forest trees provide the platform for many rituals and cultural events. It is also associated with them that they house the spirits of ancestors as well as those of the newborn. Kamala Das in ‘Nalpat House’ depicts this idea beautifully.

“To the north there were the usual cattle-sheds and the grainhusking yard. Above all those structures like a green canopy hung the leaves of the many trees that my ancestress Kunji had planted during her honeymoon days. Large trees bearing flowers or fruits threw scatter-rugs of green shadow all around the house where we played throughout the day, my brother and I.”

(Kamla Das 81)

“When we die, we die on these side of my pyre my sons shall plant a coconut tree. Then some day one of my descendants may go up to the tree and rub her palm against its bark as I went up to poor Ammalu’s tree and caressed it, murmuring futile messages to the dead...., (Kamla Das 85)

These lines show not only ritual and cultural significance of the plants but also a deep sense of belongingness.

6 How always figurative use of plants is app

Figurative use of plant in advertisements might be an interesting application of this comparative approach. As plants are viewed as ecologically friendly green is the colour of plants both literally and figurative leaves in marketing describe environment responsibility. Plants are also signifiers of abstract concepts on the cover page of magazine. In this regard the poem ‘Partriot’ by Robert Browning is very important. This very poem beautifully describes the emotions of happiness and joy of the people when the Patriot returns home. They spread flowers and flowers everywhere.

Literature is but a mirror of society and International Society as a whole needs to understand the paramount importance of trees and plants and, what a more pleasant situation can be there if the contemporary literature serves this purpose as it has been doing of late. Writers and authors, well they certainly do, Court Cupid ? Yes ! But they also woo Nature, its objects and its numerous manifestations among which, one, plants, also deserve observations bereft of them, indeed Literature will be much less the one for all to see Plants and Literature, in tandem do work well and give reason to imagination all the more to swell. Human health depends on well functioning ecosystems. We cannot live without goods and services that nature provides to purify our air and water, maintain soil fertility provide food & fuel and keep check on diseases.

Literature has always played an important role to educate to be nature friendly. Like an environmentalist it has always been purifying human mind. It has been rightly said that if you plan for one year, plant rice If you

plan for 10 year, plant trees, if you plan for 100 years, educate. Lawrence Buel is of the view that the success of all environments list efforts finally hinge not on some highly developed technology or some arcane new science but on state of mind : on attitudes , feeling, images, narratives.

“ ‘Earth thinking’ will gradually get incorporated in our thinking and action which will greatly help in transforming our life styles to sustainable ones.”
(Anubha Kaushik 163)

The environment is at the brim. Henry David Thoreau shows his concern with degrading effect of community commerce and industry on wild areas and pastoral beauty of nature. The essay ‘Walking’ is significant wildness thought regarding nature. He supports the view that both land and people a balance of the cultivated and wild. Rightly said, “ In Wildness is the preservation of the world.” Thoreau with his broader vision sees the waste weeds are food for the birds and the squirrels important are views of other equally scholars to look at wilderness. Leopold emphasized the value of wildness for scientific progress. The land ethic which grew out of his conviction that we could save our mother earth by a change in our ethical attitude to wards land. Mieve laid emphasis an spiritual and aesthetic values of widner that comes in to clash with the progressive ----- vision of Gifford Pinchot who supports national public resources should be developed nature and culture are bound with each other with the belt of knowledge. This //// was perceived by the writers of different ages differently. Whether they are romantics, Neoclarics or modern they conceptualized in the was, the society they lived and transmitted with the help of stories and narratives Nature and culture are indistinguishable. Pastoral beauty is viewed as a boundary line between literary and lived nature. This relation relates that reality. A lay man can realize human alienation from natural world leads social and environment decline.

The Poet Kashmir S Madan, a keen observer of man, nature and love, beautifully says in the poem ‘Here We Earn And Spend And Save’

“See the old gardener how gladly doth the plant
The tree, the fruits of which he knows he can’t
Harvest and still will continue to toil

Till the day, beneath the clay he ceases to part” page no 38

Robert Forst’s observation is very realistic when he says that though the change of sasion has made life easy for mankind but that must not make us oblivious of the fact that the cold weather can return and make life difficult for one and all :

“Be glad of water, but don’t forget
The lurking frost in the earth beneath
That will steel forth when the sun is set
And show on water its crystal teeth”

And in the present era, it won’t require any stretch of imagination to conclude that materialistic progress not with standing, we have to nurture nature for sustainable development. It is our collective responsibility to work together for providing a brighter future for the coming generations-a lifestyle that is self sustaining,

resources that are adequate for all, development that is not compromising our ecosystem, flora-fauna and wildlife that are in safe hands and the land, water and air that are fit for humans and other forms of life.

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- 1 As also said by Mahatma Gandhi. There is enough man's need but not for his greed
- 2 Declining
- 3 In today's scenar'0 the fact requires attention that our mother nature has always done work of calming a stressed mind when ever it is in its pleasant form. Similarly gardening
- 4 The very feeling of oneness nature led the great poet of America, Walt Whitman to write a big volume of Grass and motivated the eminent Indian scientist Jagdish Chander Bose to acclaim and prove.
- 5 True to say

6. Now a day figurative use of plants appeals to all the start of life. This does not have only commercial benefits but also it is also source of physical and mental health.
7. But unfortunately the environment is at the brim.
8. Here literature comes to play the role of a friendly environment that has always.