

Environmental Degradation and Responsibility of Human Being

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Abstract

The nature is an important factor in human life. But the man has not only brought the ruin but also the complete destruction by applying the environmental degradation. Eco-criticism by paying and drawing the attention towards the nature interprets the author, character or work in the natural system and it makes the individual as a member of ecosystem. The present research article throws light on the requirement of people to know the importance of nature and our responsibility towards it to save and enhance the natural resources.

Key words: Eco-criticism, Environment, Nature,

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Man is closely connected with the Environment. The nature is an important factor in human life. Nature in every sense is trying all time to be the good friend of human being but the selfish attitude of the man has today completely changed him. From mere receiver now he is turned into the grabber. Though human being is worthless without the environment he is mercilessly molding it for his own purpose. Consequently, the changed role of the man has not only brought the ruin of himself but also the complete destruction of the world. The present paper is an attempt to study the environmental degradation and responsibility of human life with the special reference of the novel *Tahan* (Thirst) by Sadanand Deshmukh, an eminent writer in Marathi literature.

Environmental issues are defined as problems with the planet's systems (air, water, soil, etc.) that have developed as a result of human interference or mistreatment of the planet. Environmental problems are global warming, Deforestation, Air and Water Pollution, Overpopulation etc. Effects of environmental degradation are Soil erosion, Destruction of biodiversity, famine, flood etc. Today the singing nature is turned into the weeping nature due to the selfish attitude of the man. Nature and literature have close affinity. From early ages the literature is speaking about nature and its various aspects. Now the literary critics are analyzing the nature that is depicted in the literature by various writers through their literary works. They are paying attention on study and analysis of the strong bond between nature and society. Ecology and eco-criticism are the significant aspects for the literary study and research. Eco-criticism is a new critical movement that attempts to link literary criticisms and theory with today's ecological issues. It studies the relationship between literature and the science of ecology by applying ecological concepts to literature. Glotfelty defines in *The Eco-criticism Reader* is that "eco-criticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment", Glotfelty calls the "undervalued genre of nature writing". (Glotfelty, Cheryl and Harold Fromm (Eds). *The Eco criticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*.) Lawrence Buell defines "'eco criticism' ... as "...study of the relationship between literature and the environment conducted in a spirit of commitment to environmentalist praxis". (Buell, Lawrence. "Toxic Discourse." *Critical Inquiry* 24.3 (1998): 639-665). Eco-criticism pays and draws the attention towards the nature. It interprets the author, character or work in the natural system. This approach shifts critical focus from social relations toward natural relationships and view the individual as a member of ecosystem. Through this study the critics aim at making the people realize the significance of nature and our responsibility towards it to save and enhance the natural resources. India has received larger appreciation from the world because of its natural resources. It has given freely several natural resources like water, seas, oceans, all types of environment – winter, summer, rainy seasons, mines etc. Indians are not exception to it.

The select writer Sadanand Deshmukh is a postmodern versatile literary person in Marathi literature. He has to his credit eight collections of short stories and four novels. His

collections of short stories are honored with Maharashtra Sahitya Academy's G.L.Thokal Award, K.B.Rohamare Award, State Award by Maharashtra Govt. etc. He is honored with the prestigious Sahitya Academy Award of 2004 for his novel 'Baromas'. Sadanand Deshmukh has succeeded in creating his special place in Marathi literature by exhibiting the country life in Maharashtra by using Marathi rural dialects through his literary works. The select novel 'Tahan' is a heartrending Marathi novel that speaks about the suffering in village life in the light of drought.

The select novel *Tahan* describes the significant role of water in human life. The shortage of water makes the human life full of disturbances. It becomes the cause of complete downfall of man. He reaches to his destruction from internally as well as externally, physically as well as morally. Sadanand Deshmukh himself says in the preface of *Tahan*,

“मूल्यहीन समाजव्यवस्थेत आपली जीवनमुल्ये जोपासणा'यानां एक अटळ सघर्ष सध्याच्या विघटनकाळात करावा लागत आहे . त्यांचा हा सघर्ष सध्याच्या भयावह परिस्थितीशी आहे तसाच तो भौतिक सुखाच्या मायावी मृगजळामागे धावून महाकाय शुन्य हाती येणा'या सैरभैर मनोवृत्तीच्या तरुण पिढीशी सुध्दा आहे .
(Deshmukh Sadanand, Continental Publication, 2002, Pune)

Baban Shewale, a village youth, a farmer's son tries to collect money by exploiting his bulls. Once while facing the famine the village feels the deficiency of the water that causes several problems. While fulfilling the demands of the villagers for water he blindly applies the devilish way of using the bulls, Chabilya and Murlya. Even when no one dares to use tractor for bringing the water from the risky and difficult way Baban uses his bulls. The temptation of getting more and more money by selling water provokes him to behave like devil with the bulls. His negligence turns the bulls into just skeletons with no energy. Though his father, Raghoji Shewale has severally warned him to take care of the bulls Baban neglects towards it. Consequently when the government begins to provide the tankers to the village he realizes his mistake and tries his best to reform his mistake. But the time has gone and he finds his bulls, the only support of his family on death bed condition.

The present study has highlighted a horrible truth that nature is the friend of human being but the same friend becomes the enemy if she is disturbed. The anger of the nature causes environmental degradation and it follows with the destruction of human life. Sadanand Deshmukh has illustrated this fact by throwing light on several evils that occur because of environmental degradation. The select novel *Tahan* focuses on a variety of mishaps that enter with the famine.

The major problem is conflict among the people. The select novel depicts the disturbed relationships that follow the drought. The select novel shows several clashes- clash between father-son, between mother-son, husband-wife and also the clashes among the friends and villagers. Raghoji Shewale who is a popular villager who takes care of bulls is always against Baban's use of bulls to bring the water. Several times he tries to fight against Baban to turn him away from the evil but the lust of money makes Baban to neglect at his father though in the end he agrees with his father but when the time has gone.

Similarly, easy way of getting money through water supply excites Baban's mother, Ramcore. Through utter excitement she insists him to repeat the trips. Even she rejects to see the suffering of the bulls and naturally her husband for whom his bulls are like his children. She prefers to enjoy the wealthy life and collects enough money and jewelry but she can't preserve her wealth as her own son, Baban steals the property to manage his affair with a slum dweller girl, Ratna. It disturbs the mother as well as the son. He feels very sorry to see the bad condition of his mother and his disloyalty towards her.

Moreover the tempting sight of flowing money spoils the love of Ramcore for her husband and she becomes the constant critic of Raghoji. She becomes such a nuisance to him that even when she suffers from high fever he rejects to call her and doesn't allow his daughter, Varsha to wake her because her waking will be continuation to the blaming to Raghoji.

The draught provokes the villagers for the hunger-strike and when the political leaders try to get the credit it excites the people gathered to attend the public meeting. Within a moment the public meeting turns into the riot against the draught which causes several people to have harm including Raghoji. Being the victim of the rebellion Raghoji gets his one leg plastered and he becomes dependent on others.

Along with the above mentioned evils the present study has focused its attention on one of the major evils that accompany drought i.e. corruption. While commenting on the corruption Sadanand Deshmukh comments,

“ . . .निसर्गाची . . .अवकृपा झालेल्या वैराण वातावरणात जगणा-या मानसांची मने रखरखीत आततायी होऊन किडुन जाणार नाहीत काय पाणी टचांयिच्या या दिवसात विविध पातळीवरील आपली तहान भागवण्याचा प्रयत्न करणारे अनेक महाभाग दीसून येतात . अभावग्रस्ताला अडचणीत पकडुन बनवाबनवी करून आपला स्वार्थ साधून घेण्यासाठी असे टगे गावागावातून नेहमीच धडपडत असतात .” (Ibid)

The anger of nature turns the innocent minds of people into a senseless one. During the drought unfortunately we are getting various evil people who try to satisfy their thirst at various levels by trapping the needy. Baban Shewale uses corrupt way to sell the water. When the government begins to provide the water to all the villagers the drivers, owners of the tankers apply the corrupt way by selling the water to the Dhabewales and mess owners. It is the water that provokes Ratna to accept illicit relationships with Baban. Varathe Guruji, the school teacher complains for spending half of his salary to buy the water.

It is a popular thought that “health is wealth” but the victims of drought can’t mean the same. Without water no one can satisfy the thirst then how it is possible to expect hygiene awareness. The villagers in the select novel do not get the water for drinking naturally they do not take bath for several days. And when the government provides the water it is beyond the hygienic condition. It easily brings with it several diseases like typhoid. Then there starts the struggle of the villagers with the disease. They feel short of money to get medicine and treatment. The need of money still added in the bitter position of the villagers who begin freely to follow the evil way of stealing the kidneys and selling them. Moreover they turn towards selling the bones of the animals and for getting the bones they begin to keep an eye on the animals on death bed. So all these evils follow one another and the root cause of these evils and human destruction is the careless behavior of man towards the nature. Through the selfish attitude the villagers turn their attention towards the urbanization and reject to take care of the farm work. Moreover the deforestation adds in the troubles. Consequently, the river in the villager which once used to flow with full speed today is completely dry. Nature has always proved to be stronger than man. It is the master of man. By controlling the manpower through natural disasters like famine, drought, flood, earthquake it has proved the same. Man’s life and nature are so interlinked with each other. But man’s irresponsible actions cause irreparable damages to nature. Mahatma Gandhi said as it is quoted by Vidnod Dixit in his article, It’s Our Responsibility to save the Environment “What we are doing to the forests of the world is but a mirror reflection of what we are doing to ourselves and to one another”. (<https://www.afternoonvoice.com/its-our-responsibility-to-save-the-environment.html>).

The nature has given us various gifts like water, sunlight, air, food etc. Saving the nature and environment is highly important for human being. We are wholly depended on the nature. It is our responsibility to take care of it. Moreover within last many years water, air and land have been grabbed and squizzed by man to gain more and more money. It has caused long term environmental losses. We need to help the environment and preserve and protect the nature’s aspects. The select novel *Tahan* pictures the effect of natural calamity, draught on the humanity. Accordingly it throws light on one more bitter truth that along with environmental degradation man suffers through the cultural pollution.

It is the cycle of the nature that follows happiness after misery and then again happiness. Similarly the select novel states the misery and ruin of the villagers through the

drought but the end is suggestive of the regeneration of nature after prolonged torture and naturally joyful and happy life of the villagers. It is suggestive through Baban's and Raghoji's remembering the sights of flooded river, springs, green fields etc. The man can enjoy the life accompanied by the nature but the exploitation of nature is like digging the pit for self.

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