

The Romanticism the Age of Environmentalism

Sharad Kashyap*

*Research Scholar, Singhania University, Pacheri Bari, Jhunjhunu, Rajasthan, India.

Received May 01, 2024; Revised May 21, 2024; Accepted May 24, 2024

ABSTRACT

At present the whole world is facing several environmental crises and is involved in finding the solutions of these problems. Literature has also played a vital role to resolve the issues. Eco-criticism, Green-Writing, Nature-Writing, Eco-poetics, Eco-feminism, Environmentalism and many other new termed has been introduced in the field of Literary Criticism in 20th century. In this paper, I shall discuss how Literature was conscious towards these global environmental crises even in 18th and 19th century. How did the writers of the Age of Romanticism raise their voice to protect the nature and environment?

Keywords: Eco-criticism, Eco-feminism, Nature-writing, Green-writing

According to Greg Garrad it is generally agreed that modern environmentalism begins with 'A Fable For Tomorrow' in Rachel Carson's *Silent* [1]. But it is a general truth that Environmentalism had begun since long ago. When we observed the Indian Mythology we find that early-men worshipped the natural objects as deities e.g. Water as God Varuna, Fire as God Agni and Wind as God Pawan etc. According to this mythology Indra was the God of Rain and goddess Sarswati is the originator of all Indian Arts. She is considered as Muse. Undoubtedly these mythologies lead us to the critical theory of transcendentalism by interconnecting God, Nature and Man. With the development of science, we find new facts which proved that all these things merely natural objects and abiotic components of our environment which are provided to living organisms for their survival and don't belong to any divine theory. The scientific facts make human conscious to know about nature and its mysteries and he found that nature is full of resources and wealth. Knowing that, he began to exploit nature for his benefits. The Age of Industrialization is a major example of it. Many writers of the 18th and 19th century raised their voice against this exploitation in their works which starts the era of environmentalism. Vivid and Clear expression of environmentalism can be seen in the works of the Romantic Age. The Age of Romanticism has the many prominent voices of nature. William J. Long in his book 'English Literature Its History and its Significance for the Life of the English-Speaking World' writes "The essence of Romanticism was, it must be remembered, that literature must reflect all that is spontaneous and unaffected in nature and in man, and be free to follow its own fancy in its own

way."

(372) Jonathan Bate coined the term „Romantic Ecology“ to describe the poetry of Wordsworth, Clare and others who initiated an important „environmental tradition“ which extended into the nineteenth century. 'Ecological Literary Criticism: Romantic Imagining and the Biology of the Mind' [2]. by Karl Krober reframes and revisits familiar Romantic literature using concepts like „the biology of mind“ and engages with question regarding the consequences of ecology for poetry and suggests that poetry should be read holistically as a complete ecosystem that is embedded in the larger system of nature, politics, culture and society. James C. McKusick in his work *Green Writing: Romanticism and Ecology* [3]. hailed William Wordsworth, John Clare, Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson, P.B. Shelley and Jane Austen as pioneers of a whole spectrum of environmental position ranging from Deep Ecology to eco-feminism.

William Blake's poetry did not articulate concern for nature directly like Wordsworth's and Coleridge's. Blake's works ranging from *The Song of Experience* [4] to *Jerusalem* [5] hint the ways in which industrial capitalism of the times

Corresponding author: Sharad Kashyap, Research Scholar, Singhania University, Pacheri Bari, Jhunjhunu, Rajasthan, India, E-mail: sharad.kashyap985@gmail.com

Citation: Kashyap S. (2024) The Romanticism the Age of Environmentalism. *J Historic Stud Soc Sci Lit*, 1(1): 1-4.

Copyright: ©2024 Kashyap S. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

affected both the working-class population as well as nature. The Tyger and The Lamb of Blake clearly express the system of divine justice and supports the theory of transcendentalism and act as the mirror to the human beings to show the probable results of their activities. John Keats and P.B. Shelley were the crucial voices of the second generation of the Romanticism who tried to remove the divine elements from their views and tried to set up a relationship between man and nature and turned our study from transcendentalism to environmentalism. Carson's Silent Spring

included an epigram from Keats' poem, a Belle Dame Sans Merci" in which a beautiful woman spoils the environment with her magical powers [6].

The sedge is wither'd from the lake and no birds sing

When the world is looking at the environment only for the natural resources for its development and wanted to become prosperous by exploiting the natural resources, there was the voice of Keats who looked towards the nature and its beautiful objects only for joy [7,8]. He finds the consolation from worldly grief and pain with the beauty of nature. In Endymion he says:

A thing of beauty is joy forever:

Its loveliness increases; it will never

Pass into nothingness

Jonathan Bate considered, The Ode to Autumn' by John Keats as the result of the [9,10] eruption of the Tambora Volcano in Indonesia which caused bad weather and poor harvest for three years in nearly every country in Europe due to dust from the eruption that was blasted into the stratosphere, filtering out the sun and lowering temperature. (31) This poem shows the concern of Keats for the future of earth. John Keats is the most loveable poet, our literature has ever produced [11,12]. He always sees the bright and pleasant sides of nature even though in the stage of grief ness.

Rosemarie Rowley writes in his, Byron and Nature-Was Byron An Eco-Poet? "Byron interconnected himself to the aloneness of a spirit in nature facing the outcomes of rationality but looking still to mystery and enchantment and seeking sublime [13,14]. The consummation of relationship with Augusta which mirrored the harmony of nature herself had been polluted and his capacity to have a sense of tranquility became well-nigh impossible. Byron writes:

I was disposed to be pleased I am a lover of nature

And an admirer of beauty I can bear fatigue

And welcome privation

And have seen some of the noblest views of the world but in all this

The recollection of bitterness

And more especially of recent and more home desolation
Which must accompany me through life

Charles E. Robinson in the introduction of Frankenstein [15,16] writes "The nature is the principal of life" (xxv) In Frankenstein, Shelley presents the both favorable (kind) and unfavorable (cruel) images of nature. Nature is breathtaking in its beauty and it is shattering in its brutality. Nature and its objects are life-giving and nurturing to humans but it is a threat by the forces of progress [17,18]. She represents the both sides of nature when she says:

"Its fair lakes reflect a blue and sky; and, when troubled by the winds, their tumult is but as a play of a lively infant, when compared to roarings of the giant ocean."

These lines show the concern about nature and how the human activities might be harmful for nature and its beauty. Like the other poets of the Romantic Age, Mary Shelley also appreciates the role of literature to conserve the environment and warns the humans against the Eschatology, when Vicotr describes Clerval as "Clerval! Beloved friend! even now it delights me to record your words, and to dwell on the praise of which you are so eminently deserving [19,20]. He is being formed in the „very poetry of nature“."

We find the glimpse of Apocalypse" in the "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" by S.T.Coleridge, when he determines the fate of sailor according to their action as he killed the Albatross. The Rime of the Ancient Mariner is a threat to the human beings that aggravation with nature will be destructive for whole human race and lead us to the Eschtology. We are able to survive here as long as Nature is existed. Human beings will have to live in the harmony of nature [21]. On the Earth, life is existed because of its environmental conditions as Wordsworth speaks n the "Education of Nature":

Three years she grew in sun and shower,

Like Keats, Wordsworth also considers the natural objects a thing of joy when he says "My heart leaps up when I behold a rainbow in the sky [22]." David Bromwich, a professor of English at Yale University says that Wordsworth "has touched the sublime." (xv) Another Romantic poet John Clare also considers the nature as a living personality like Wordsworth when he describes all the natural objects as having life and feelings:

"All nature has a feeling: woods, fields, brooks Are life eternal: and in silence they Speak happiness beyond the reach of books."

These lines convey the message similar to "The Tables Turned". Clare's poem "Autumn Birds" describes the beauty of the nature that is produced because of different kinds of birds. His poem "Autumn" presents the eternity of English countryside and lamentation of its disruption. His biographer,

Jonathan Bate states that Clare was “the greatest laboring-class poet that England has ever produced. No one has ever written more powerfully of nature, of a rural childhood, and of the alienated and unstable self” [23]. Prose writer Charles Lamb also derides the contemporary fascination with nature and the countryside in his essay “The Londoner” (1802) when he says “I was born under the shadow of St. Dunstan’s steeple where the conflux of the eastern and western inhabitants of this twofold city meet and jostle in friendly opposition at temple-bar.” Further he adds “than I could ever receive from all the flocks of silly sheep that ever whitened the plains of Arcadia or Epsom Downs.” [24]. These lines show the wilderness and sublime of Lamb and describe the beauty of countryside that is produced by flora and fauna of the land. One of the most prominent poets of the age, P.B. Shelley presents the both pessimistic and optimistic views of nature in his poetry [25]. He seeks the consolation from his grief in nature. Nature was the ultimate source of consolation as well as joy for him. Shelley uses the scientific principles in his poetry with natural objects. In “The Cloud”, he tells about the basic property of matter with the help of nature-imagery.

“I change, but cannot die.” (518)

Shelley wishes to die in the lap of nature. In „Stanzas Written in Dejection Near Naples“, Shelley draws a sensuous picture of his approaching death and hopes to be paid tribute by sea.

And I might feel in the warm air My cheek grows cold, and hear the sea

Breathe o’er dying brain its last monotony. (516)

I would like to say that it was the 19th century when most of the nature-voices raised against the Industrial Revolution to protect the Environment. The work of the prominent writers of the time attracts the attention of the society towards the environmental crises and appeal to degrade pollution and conserve the nature and natural objects. So, it will not be hyperbolic to say the Age of Romanticism is truly the age of Environmentalism.

REFERENCES

1. Abrams MH (1960) English Romantic Poets Modern Essays in Criticism. New York Oxford University Press, Print.
2. Bate J (2004) John Clare A Biography, Pan Macmillan.
3. Bate J (2014) Romantic Ecology: Wordsworth and the Environmental Tradition. London Routledge Revival, Print.
4. Bate J (2000) The Ode to Autumn as Ecosystem. The Green Studies Reader: From Romanticism to Ecocriticism Laurence Coupe. London Routledge 256-61. Print
5. Blake W (1982) The Book of Thel The Complete Prose and Poetry of William Blake. David. V Erdman. Berkeley University of California Press.
6. Buell L (1995) The Environmental Imagination Thoreau Nature Writing and the Formation of American Culture Cambridge MA Harvard University Press, Print.
7. Clark T (2011) The Cambridge Introduction to Literature and the Environment UK Cambridge University Press, Print.
8. Coleridge ST (1875) The Rime of the Ancient Mariner the Poetical Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Derwent and Sara Coleridge. New York Appleton & Company.
9. Coupe L (2000) General Introduction. The Green Studies Reader: From Romanticism to Ecocriticism Laurence Coupe. London: Routledge, 1-8. Print, 1-8.
10. Doren MV (2002) Selected Poetry of William Wordsworth Introduction by David Bromwich. The Modern Library Classics Press, Print.
11. Fletcher RH (2002) The Romantic Triumph. A History of English Literature. [Http://www.blackmask.com](http://www.blackmask.com), ebook.
12. Forman H, Buxton C B (1906) Editor the Poetical Works of John Keats. The Clarendon Press, London Print.
13. Garrad G (2004) Ecocriticism the New Critical Idiom Routledge Taylor & Francis Group. London and Newyork.
14. Kroeber K (1994) Ecological Literary Criticism Romantic Imagining and the Biology of Mind. New York Columbia University Press.
15. Lamb C (1802) The Londoner. Available online at: <http://essays.quotidiana.org/lamb/londoner/>
16. Long WJ (2011) The Age of Romanticism English Literature Its History and its Significance for the Life of the English-Speaking World Maple Press Script Edition Print.
17. Marchand LA, Thomas D (2002) Selected Poetry of Lord Byron, Introduction by Notes by Jeffery Vail. The Modern Library Classics Press, Print
18. Moore TESQ (1855) The Life of Lord Byron with His Letters and Journals, 1. Philadelphia. Lippincott, Grambo & Co.
19. Phillips D (2003) The Truth of Ecology Nature Culture and Literature in America. New York Oxford University Press, Print.
20. Rigby K (2014) Romanticism and Ecocriticism the

Oxford Book of Ecocriticism Greg Garrard Oxford, UK Oxford University Press, Print.

21. Sen S, Shelley PB (2016) Selected Poems Unique Publishers Print.
22. Shelley M, David GH, Finn, Jason SR (2017) Frankenstein or the Modern Prometheus the Mint Press London.
23. Soper K (1995) What is Nature Oxford, UK Blackwell Print.
24. Steeves HR (1922) Editor Selected Poems of William Wordsworth with Matthew Arnolds Essay on Wordsworth. Harcourt Brace and Company New York. Print
25. William, Raymond (1983) Keywords A Vocabulary of Culture and Society London Fontana, Print.