

PalArch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt / Egyptology

AN ECOCRITICAL STUDY OF SEEGER'S SELECTED POEMS: AN ODE TO NATURAL BEAUTY AND THE DESERTED GARDEN

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Rahman, Muhammad Saad, Rahman Ullah. An Ecocritical Study Of Seeger's Selected
Poems: An Ode To Natural Beauty And The Deserted Garden-- Palarch's Journal Of
Archaeology Of Egypt/Egyptology 20(1), 1079-1088. ISSN 1567-214x**

ABSTRACT

Ecocriticism is the liaison amid literature and the physical environment. The study is carried out to explore the representation of nature and the relationship between nature and human beings. The analysis of the poems: An Ode to Natural Beauty and The Deserted Garden unbosoms the environmental issues and humans' responsibilities towards nature. The study is an attempt towards the cognizance of environmental situation in the age of industrialization. The research is qualitative in nature. It analyzes Seeger's selected poems from the perspective of ecocriticism. The study aims to explore the importance and preservation of the natural world. The study is an attempt to unearth the concern of ecocriticism as well as to explore Seeger's contribution to the invigorating of human beings towards conservation and preservation of the ecosystem. The study has shown that living in concinnity with nature, human could get true happiness. The study has shown nature as a tectonic part of human life. The aim of the study is to explore the relationship between human beings and their physical environment. The study also shows that giving respect to the natural world and living in harmony with nature can conserve the diversity.

INTRODUCTION

Alan Seeger, an American war poet and observer of nature, who almost wrote about nature and foregrounded nature and ecological issues in his poetry. The present research is an attempt to study his poetry from the perspective of ecocriticism. The poem *The Deserted Garden* is the outcome of his short time in Mexico and experiences associated with it, have left deep marks on his poetry. The longest of his poems, *The Deserted Garden* is a veritable gallery of imaginative landscape. He describes the natural beauty of Mexico. The poet portrays a beautiful picture of the natural beauty including mountains, ocean, gardens and different season. The poem describes an imaginative village and the beauty of nature has been depicted in the poem. The poem *An Ode to Natural Beauty* is an address to the natural beauty, where different seasons and their importance have been explored. The beauty of the earth has been depicted. He considers nature as a living force because he addresses almost every element of nature. He poeticizes the view of green valleys, landscape, mountains and ocean. The poem is about the exploration and preservation of nature and the mother land.

Problem Statement

Environmental and ecological degradation is a major concern of many authors and intellectuals and is a broad field of research study. However the previous research studies have almost ignored ecological perspective in the selected poems of Allen Seeger. The current study investigates and explores *An Ode to Natural Beauty* and *The Deserted Garden* from ecocritical perspective.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

To explore the representation of nature in Seeger's selected poems
To explore the relationship between nature and human beings in Seeger's selected poems

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

How nature is presented in Seeger's selected poems?
How the relationship between nature and human being is presented in Seeger's selected poems?

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH

The present research is an attempt to study Seeger's selected poems from the perspective of ecocriticism. It also shows the relationship between physical environment and humans that has been depicted in the selected poems of Alan Seeger. The study is an attempt towards the awareness of environmental situation in the age of industrialization. It reveals human attitude towards nature and ecosystem. The present research is helpful for the students of literature as well ecology and environmental studies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Das (2020) explores that ecocriticism is a new critical discipline which is distinctive amongst modern literary theory and cultural theories. It studies the connection between nature and literature. It explores the relationship between the environment and literature. Literature and art influence human life. Human

life too influences the art and literature. Ecocriticism redefines our relationship with the environment and literature. It identifies roots of the problem of ecological crisis in the relationship of the society with nature and also the structure of the society inside. The loss of ecology has irreversible and intergenerational consequences. The protection of air, water, soil and health ought to be primary environmental imperatives.

Hazarika (2019) claims that ecocriticism has been a significant field of study since last decade of the twentieth century. The chief focus of ecocriticism is the relationship man shares with nature. Mukhtar (2017) is of the view that ecocriticism is a broad term concerned with nature writing and ecological themes in literature. Nature and human life are interlinked to such an extent that it is unimaginable for human beings to separate themselves from its influence. Bhattacharyya (2017) is of the view that poetry, as with art in any other form, has an existence that is intertwined with the nature the poet, or the artist, lives in.

Mohammad (2017) says that literature has uniquely played a fundamental role as a reproductive medium or stage where great theories are experientially shown from which one can gain better understanding of human place, its characteristics and human refinement in such a place. In addition, he states that the romantic poets were deeply concerned about what nature is and what one can gain from it, and he attempts to eco-critically discover the very linkage these writers have portrayed between nature and culture. Mishra (2016) is concerned with the environmental issues in world selected literature. He claims that during the last few decades, environment has posed a great threat to human society as well as the mother earth. The extensive misuse of natural resources has left us at the brink of ditch. The rainforests are cut down, the fossil fuel is fast decreasing, the cycle of season is at disorder, ecological disaster is frequent now round the globe and our environment is at margin. Under these circumstances, there arose a new theory of reading nature writing during the last decade of the previous century called Ecocriticism.

Oroskhan and Faghfori (2015) claim that backdrop of global deforestation and environmental degradation compelled the critics to change their angles of vision and examine the works of art differently. As a result, Eco criticism emerged as a new literary field in the 1990s. It investigates human's relation with the nature presented in literature. In this respect, Eco critical works written by Romanticists led to the negligence of the importance of environmental concern in 17th and 18th English literature. Abbasi and Pourakaramali (2014) are of the view that man desires to know, to discover, to dominate, and to prosper has resulted in a variety of responses from Nature. Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (1797-1798) is about a transatlantic voyage of discovery abound with natural descriptions that make it a nature/environmental poem. Hojjat and Daronkolae (2013) are of the view that nature is one of the indispensable elements of writing. It has drawn the attention of writers specially the novelists. Farooq and Chandra (2013) say that ecocriticism addresses how humans relate to non-human nature or the environment in literature. It has grown out of the traditional approach to literature in which the critic explores the local or global, the material or

physical, or the historical or natural history in the context of a work of art. Their paper is a modest attempt to unearth the concerns of ecocriticism as well as to explore William Wordsworth's contribution to the awakening of modern man towards conservation and preservation of the ecosystem. Lankford (2010) explores the role of nature in three picture books that broach the topics of death, grief, depression.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework for the present research is based on Cheryll Glotfelty's 1996 model. Cheryll Glotfelty's *The Ecocriticism Reader* (1996) defines ecocriticism as the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment. The main points of the framework are: Considering nature not just as the stage upon which the human story is acted out, but as an actor in the drama. (Glotfelty, Fromm. 1996 p. xxi). For her ecocriticism is the relationship between literature and the physical environment. (Glotfelty, Fromm, 1996, p.xviii). Nature should be protected by human laws. This is one of the important characteristics of ecological vision. Nature is not the only focus of ecocriticism but other topics including animals, cities, mountains, desert and rivers should also be discussed. She also states that analogous efforts in ecocriticism study how nature is presented in literature."(Glotfelty, Fromm 1996, p. xxi) .The afore-mentioned statements show yearning for the exploration of the natural world.

DATA ANALYSIS

"Considering nature not just as the stage upon which the human story is acted out, but as an actor in the drama" (Glotfelty, Fromm. 1996 p. xxi). The poet poeticizes the role of nature in human life in the lines "Here, among the trees...song at night." He foregrounds nature in term of trees. Trees have an important role in the existence of human beings. Trees provide food and oxygen which is essential for all creatures. The poem presents a row of trees like a wall which provides shade for human beings and other creatures. Trees have been depicted in the poem as the source of beauty and need of human beings.

Trees contribute to a rich and healthy ecosystem. Animals, insects and birds make their homes in the trees and make a diverse ecosystem. Trees provide pure air and greenery to the planet earth. The importance of trees has been foregrounded in the poems of Alan Seeger. "And under the deep ... the perfumed breeze." For Glotfelty ecocriticism is the relationship between literature and the physical environment. Literature is the medium to spread the ecological awareness. Seeger poeticizes nature in term of flowers and their beauty. There is nothing harmful in nature for human beings. The poet poeticizes the view of the morning flowers when dew drops fell upon the flowers and make them more beautiful. The life of human beings is influenced by the environmental elements that surround them. The poem has presented the beauty and importance of the physical environment to change the attitude of human beings towards nature. The poet poeticizes the beautiful flowers in the environment. The fragrances of different flowers enhance the beauty of the earth. The flowers have been depicted as the decoration of the land in the

poem. Seeger has depicted the connection between human beings and their physical environment.

“It was the faith that ... the generous impulses.”

“Nature should be protected by human laws. This is one of the important characteristics of ecological vision”. (Glotfelty, Fromm, p. 108). The poem presents the man’s neglectful treatment towards nature. The poet demands from human beings to treat nature in a good way. The researchers are of the view that human beings should take care of the natural world. Humans have nothing to do hard for the preservation of nature. The poem contemplates the exploitation and misuse of nature. The researchers believe that this is the responsibility of human beings to protect the mother land. The researcher is of the view that for a peaceful environment. It is necessary to have a balanced relationship between nature and human beings. The relationship in which human beings give respect to the natural world as nature is helpful for human beings by providing different season, a healthy life, oxygen and a diverse ecosystem.

The poem shows affection for the earth. The researchers believe that human can preserve nature by avoiding harmful activities which affect the mother planet and should respect the nature and the planet to preserve it for the next generations. The researchers claim that humans are destroying nature rather to seek happiness within nature.

“I know a village stately city lies.”

“Nature is not the only focus of ecocriticism but other topics including animals, cities, mountains, desert and rivers should also be discussed” (Glotfelty, fromm, 1996, p.xxiii). The poet poeticizes a village in a valley covered by mountain. The way of the valley is covered by olive trees and vineyard. The city in the pure air and clear atmosphere presents a beautiful picture of the nature. The open fields and mountains shining under the sky in a pure air which is free from smog. The poet poeticizes the beauty of the city and the mountains. The important natural elements are foregrounded in the stanza.

“Analogous efforts in ecocriticism study how nature is presented in literature.”(Glotfelty, Fromm 1996, p. xxi). The beauty of nature has always been the first source of inspiration for Alan Seeger. “Whereon on the shafts ... glorious banners soar.” In the stanza he presents a clear picture of the blue sky; the rays of sunlight clarify the land. The poet poeticizes rainbow which appear after rain. A rainbow is a metrological phenomenon that is caused by reflection, refraction and dispersion of light in water droplets resulting in a spectrum of light appearing in the sky. It takes the form of a multicolored circular arc. The rainbow consists of different colors including red and green which gives additional beauty to the sky. The poem presents the poet yearning to remain young to feel and enjoy the beauty of nature including sunset, starry night, silvery light of the moon, snow-covered mountain, deep and dark forest and the fragrances of flowers, which is presented in the poem.

“Ecocriticism is the relationship between literature and the physical environment” (Glotfelty, Fromm, 1996, p.xviii). The poem presents nature as a living entity in the lines “That coming...dearer to me.” The researchers are of the view that human should feel and praise nature like him. The poet held a firm faith that nature could enlighten the kindheartedness and universal brotherhood of human beings, and only existing in harmony with nature where human could get true happiness. The poem shows the poet’s love towards nature. He believes that the company of nature gives joy to the human hearts and souls. The poem considers nature as the teacher and healer for human beings. The researcher believes that the poet himself seeks satisfaction and happiness in the tranquility of nature and suggests the rest of human beings to be loyal to the natural world. The researcher is of the view that human should seek happiness and admire nature instead of the destruction of the natural world.

“Me, from sweet...traveller’s heart.”

The poem presents the importance of nature in human life. The researcher believes that human survival without nature is impossible. It provides human beings with the necessities to survive. Right from the food we eat, the air we breathe, the clothes we wear, and the houses we live in are the gift of nature. Every form of nature, for instance, the plants, rivers, mountains, moon, are of equal significance for human beings. The researchers are of the view that massive deforestation, resultant environmental pollution, wildlife destruction, and global warming are posing great threats to the survival of living beings.

“I have fared...yours never will.”

“Analogous efforts in ecocriticism study how nature is presented in literature.”(Glotfelty, Fromm 1996, p. xxi). The above lines show the poet yearning for the exploration of the natural world. The researcher believes that nature is the source of entertainment and satisfaction for human beings. The poem explores the natural world, its beauty and importance in human life. The poem presents the clouds, pale horizon, wind and valley to describe the beauty of the natural world. The relationship of human beings and the natural world has been depicted in Seeger’s poetry. “Though other voices chide, yours never will” the poet addresses the nature. The researchers are of the view that nature never disappoints human beings. The importance and the beauty of the natural world have been depicted in the stanza.

“There is a power...principle and soul.”

The poem presents nature’s significance to human beings than simply aesthetic beauty. The above lines show the connection of human being with nature and the universe. The researchers believe that there is a power (God) who bestowed human beings with the asset of nature. Nature is the art of God which is created for human beings. The poet poeticizes the sun and the stars as the clothes of the sky and nature. The dim light of the stars illuminates and beautify the earth at night while the sun has equal importance for all creatures

on the earth. The poet compares the beauty of the heavenly bodies with dew drops and flowers. Both have the same beauty like the sun and the stars at day and night. God has gifted human beings with blessings like nature, the stars and the sun which are beneficial for human beings.

“I walked in...bro bespeaking.”

The above lines show poet's love for nature. The poet poeticizes the clouds which are the main source of rain to make the land fertile and to make the land able to grow food for human beings on earth, blossoming flowers, decorate the world. “I sought eternal loneliness” nature is eternal and everlasting. Only nature has the eternal beauty which enriches the world. The researcher believes that the poet enjoys the beauty of nature in loneliness to remain fresh forever in his heart and soul. Nature provides optimistic feel to its onlookers and arrest human mind with its attractiveness.

“On summer afternoons...emerging sign”

“Analogous efforts in ecocriticism study how nature is presented in literature.”(Glotfelty, Fromm 1996, p. xxi). The poet poeticizes nature in term of seasons. The poem presents the beauty and charm of the summer season. Summer is the hottest season occurring after spring and before autumn. The researcher believes that the beautiful sea and summer's blue sky looks clearly in afternoon to enhance the beauty of the day time. It presents a clear picture of the blue horizon when the sky and the Ocean seem to be meeting with each other. The clouds between the sky and the ocean appear clearly and make the scene beautiful. The poem presents a vivid picture of the autumn season. Autumn is the season in which fruits, flowers and vegetables grow and ripen in plenty. Autumn is also a sign of hope for human beings. Every Season has its own importance in human life.

“But here where ...heavens behind.”

” Ecocriticism is the relationship between literature and the physical environment” (Glotfelty, Fromm, 1996, p.xviii). The researchers believe that nature has equal importance for animal and human beings. The poem shows lizard and birds. They take advantages from trees. Birds make their nest and eat from trees. The poet poeticizes the wall decorated by different flowers which enhance the beauty of the wall. The poem depicts the diversity of the mother planet where humans and other creatures live in harmony with each other. The poem contemplates the interdependency of ecosystem where human and animals are dependent on nature. Nature has equal benefits for all creatures on the earth.

The poem explains the water cycle on the earth. The water cycle is the continuous moment of water within the earth and atmosphere. The poet poeticizes the greenery of earth and the beauty of mountain covered by clouds. The clouds turn into water in the shape of rain. The rain keeps the land fertile to grow flowers and food for human beings and animals. The researcher believes that nature is an important part of human life.

“For thee the mountain ... to devise”

The poem presents the earth as a “jeweled bride” because of nature. The mountains represent the power and beauty of the planet earth. Nature in every aspect, gives pleasure and satisfaction to human beings. Nature remains everlasting without the disturbance of human beings. Mountains and blue sky representation has frequently used in Seeger’s poetry as the sign of beauty and power of the earth. The researcher believes that the poem not only presents the beauty of the natural world but also explain the importance of nature in human life.

The poet poeticizes the beauty of the land when sun-rays fall on a vast area and makes everything clear. The floating clouds appear and cover the blue sky. The poem compares the floating clouds with the lotus- leaves strewn on the blue water. Both flowers and clouds are the beauty of nature. Clouds beautify the sky and flowers beautify the earth. Clouds and flowers are the need of ecosystem. The poem shows the importance of silence and tranquility in the fresh atmosphere.

“Watch the white...leafy lair”

“Analogous efforts in ecocriticism study how nature is presented in literature.”(Glotfelty, Fromm 1996, p. xxi).The poet poeticizes the valley decorated by different kinds of flowers. Flowers have presented as the sign of beauty in Seeger’s poems. The beauty of the valley and flowers attracted the mind of the poet. The description of different colors of flowers and beauty represent strong imagination of the poet. The poem presents the valley a fair creation of God. The poet praises the beauty of nature and admires it. The main focus of the poem is the representation of natural beauty. Apart from the beauty of flowers, it provides seeds that make it possible to grow more plants to help the environment

“On ample prospects...coast-towns gleam.”

“Ecocriticism is the relationship between literature and the physical environment” (Glotfelty, Fromm, 1996, p.xviii).The poet poeticizes the view of noon time when the glimmer of the sun spread on a vast area. The blue sky presents a clear picture of the atmosphere where everything seems glimmering and clear. The hazes of the mountain streams arose and mixed with the air and beautify the atmosphere. The blue seas and plains gleam with the light of the sun. Nature is almost important for all human being. Nature provides light and season for human being. The importance of seas and oceans cannot be ignored which is used in his poetry.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMENDATIONS

Alan Seeger’s selected poems have different perspectives but the researchers have analyzed it from the perspective of ecocriticism. The study shows the relationship between nature and human beings through his poems. Seeger’s poetry changes the attitude of people towards nature and by doing so; he wants

to change the way human acts towards nature. His poetry shows new ways of interacting with nature and its importance in human life. He considers nature as a living force in his poetry. The poems of Alan Seeger assume greater value and significance today in stressing the importance of maintaining the ecological balance. He believes that human should live in harmony with nature.

Alan Seeger, a lover and admirer of nature, foregrounds nature and its importance in his poetry. The beauty and importance of the natural world has been depicted in his poems. Being a war poet, he observes the beauty and importance of nature in the age of industrialization. He suggests seeking peace and satisfaction in the tranquility of nature in the age of industrialization and modernization. Seeger tries to divert the attention of human to the beauty and importance of nature. Alan Seeger is a mediator between nature and human being to connect them through his poetry.

The research has been conducted to study Seeger's selected poems from the perspective of ecocriticism. Further researches are needed to investigate long for aesthetic beauty as depicted in the poems.

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