

Eco-aesthetics in World Literature

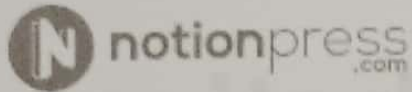


Edited By
Dr Ram Avadh Prajapati

Eco-aesthetics in World Literature

Edited by
Dr Ram Avadh Prajapati
Assistant Professor
Department of English
Bareilly College, Bareilly
Uttar Pradesh, India

● **Notion Press, India**



Notion Press

India. Singapore. Malaysia.

Published by Notion Press 2021

Copyright © Authors 2021

All Rights Reserved.

Title: *Eco-aesthetics in World Literature*

Editor: Dr Ram Avadh Prajapati

ISBN 978-1-63920-355-0

MRP- 695 INR / 110 USD

This book has been published with all reasonable efforts taken to make the material error-free after the consent of the author. No part of this book shall be used, reproduced in any manner whatsoever without written permission from the editors, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles and reviews.

The authors of the chapters are solely responsible and liable for the content of the book including but not limited to the views, representations, descriptions, statements, information, opinions and references ["Content"]. The Content of this book shall not constitute or be construed or deemed to reflect the opinion or expression of the Publisher or Editors. Neither the Publisher nor Editor endorse or approve the Content of this book or guarantee the reliability, accuracy or completeness of the Content published herein and do not make any representations or warranties of any kind, express or implied, including but not limited to the implied warranties of merchantability, fitness for a particular purpose. The Publisher and Editors shall not be liable whatsoever for any errors, omissions, whether such errors or omissions result from negligence, accident, or any other cause or claims for loss or damages of any kind, including without limitation, indirect or consequential loss or damage arising out of use, inability to use, or about the reliability, accuracy or sufficiency of the information contained in this book.

Contents

- Preface** 7-8
1. The Quest for Nirvana: Reawakening Ecological Consciousness through Art/Literature
Chayanika Roy 9-23
 2. Representing the aesthetic beauty of Nature through the eyes of the women characters in Rabindranath Tagore's short stories
Dr Amrita Das 24-33
 3. Eco critical study on Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*
Leo Lawrance James 34-46
 4. Mobility, Transgression and Climate Change: An Eco-aesthetic and Geo-critical Approach to Amitav Ghosh's *Gun Island*
Vidya Hariharan 47-62
 5. Eco-Critical Concerns in the Poetry of Ted Hughes
Yugeshwar Sah 63-75
 6. Eco-aesthetics in World Literature
Maid Corbic 76-86

7. Recalling Nature during Pandemic: A Tribute to William Wordsworth on his 251th Anniversary
Ms. Madhu 87-101
8. Nature as a metaphor in the selected poems of Ranjana Sharan Sinha
Dr Pranjali Kane 102-116
9. Tagore's *Jibansmriti (My Reminiscences)*:- An Ecocritical Perspective of 'Natural Freedom'
Dr Ayanita Banerjee 117-131
10. Eco-aesthetic Dimensions in Robert Frost's "A Prayer in Spring"
Dr Alok Chandra 132-145
- List of Contributors** 141-145

Nature as a metaphor in the selected poems of Ranjana Sharan Sinha

Dr Pranjali Kane

Ranjana Sharan Sinha, a former teacher by profession and a poet by passion, has received accolades for her poem 'Mother Nature' from none other than the Ex-President of India, Dr A P J Abdul Kalam. She has written poems on Nature, about the plight of Indian women and has also sensitively portrayed the inner angst of human beings in general. Her poems from her anthologies, 'Spring Zone', 'The Purple Jacaranda and Other Poems' and 'Scents and Shadows' have depicted her sensitivity and love of nature.

Ranjana Sharan Sinha writes 'poetry is the most beautiful form of written expressions that exists, helping

poets to convey their innermost feelings, desires, fears and aspirations. She also has to her credit a book of short stories 'Midnight Sun'. But it is through her poems which come to her like 'whispers from unknown regions', she analyses a dream which becomes poetry! She savours the moment when inspiration descends. It is both a joy and pain for the writer when she is finally able to give verbal form to the ectoplasmic dreams she envisions.

The most natural process of life perhaps is aging. An organic being is bound to mature and decay with time. Nothing and nobody can change this. And yet all of us feel the pangs of the loss of youth and the fear of the approaching end. We are never actually prepared for the most natural thing. We are not prepared to accept the reversal of roles; that the young would take care of us, that we would depend upon the others. Rather we endeavour to do everything to fool others by concealing our true age. Metaphorically, death is akin to the death of art. The fear of the artistic ability drying up is also there. This struggle of accepting old age and/or finding compensation in other meaningful things, is keenly felt and expressed by poets like Ranjana Sharan Sinha in her writings. This article is a humble attempt to study the selected poems of the writer from this perspective and to bring forth her anguish as a poet.

Out of all the churnings of the heart and the mind, man has perennially faced the fear of death. Death has been viewed as the culmination of Old Age. And old age has been considered as the loss of Youth. In his prime, man seldom comes to the threshold of annihilation. Even the remote possibility under normal circumstances seems irrelevant. It is only with the advent of Autumn that man starts realizing the never-returning possibility of the ideal life; about the mysteries of the end. So the reference to Autumn conveys so much.

Sensitive souls like the poets have often been drawn to the topic of growing old and approaching one's winter years. Old age is often synonymous to lack of physical and mental activity, hopelessness and the waning of the desired urges. It is also akin to losing one's abilities and inspirations. There are many jinx related to the creativity of artists. Simply the ill will of some people can also affect the ephemeral art. This feeling does not affect artists when they are in their prime. But as age advances and the experiences of life become more pronounced, these self-doubts start cropping up.

Be it the famous sonneteer William Shakespeare, or poets like Elizabeth Bishop, every sensitive creator has expressed his or her anguish over the decay of the human mind and body. In Sonnet 73 'That time of year thou mayst

in me behold', Shakespeare writes about the twilight of life with yellow leaves, coldness, bare ruined choirs of birds, calling old age Death's second self. The Romantic poet S T Coleridge in 'Youth and Age' expresses the change that has taken place between the 'now and then': old age has taken away the charm of youth. And yet if we can but remain young in mind, everything is saved! In the later age, the Victorian icon, Alfred, Lord Tennyson laments the wastage of Man's glory in 'Tithonus' with his eternal old age contrasted painfully with the eternal renewal of life of Aurora. Matthew Arnold's 'Growing Old' and W. B. Yeats' 'Sailing to Byzantium' resonate with the idea of the loss of glory and beauty. Yeats perhaps goes further and writes about the forward journey of man to attain something higher than the physical or the sensual even in face of old age.

If we go further down the line, the 20th Century brings to us writers like Elizabeth Bishop (1911 - 1979), an American poet and Short Story writer. She won the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry in 1956. Her work, 'Crusoe in England' is a poem of 183 lines based upon the life of Robinson Crusoe. Basically, it sums up the difficulties Bishop faced in her creative journey as a poet. For her, old age is synonymous with loss of creative abilities. The metaphorical meaning is exposed through her use of images and symbols. According to her, the process of poetic creation can be as

lonely as the exile of Robinson Crusoe. The poem is about self-pity and high responsibility of a creator.

Selected poems

A few of Ranjana Sharan Sinha's poems deal with old age and the sense of loss of youth and vitality that majority of us face in life. One can recount poems like 'Autumn Leaves' and 'Fossilized Words' from her anthology 'The Purple Jacaranda and other poems'; and, 'Once Again', 'White Fog', 'Valentine's Day at Sixty' and 'She's gone forever' from the anthology 'Scents and Shadows' here. Let us analyze these poems and try to understand the mind of the poet.

Autumn Leaves:

Metaphorically, the Autumn season has always been considered to be an age of maturity and experience. It is also the uncertainty of Death. The old order changeth, yielding place to new! It is the period before the final winter sets in. It is the period of old age which has positive as well as negative connotations; the prominent been the loss of Youth!!! People of all ages have always looked at old age with a certain amount of uncertainty, with Death lurking at every corner. But poets like Ranjana Sharan Sinha look upon old age not as an end of life but as the loss of youth and vitality. No more shall the leaves retain their green

vibrant colour. The sadness percolates through every object of nature:

'Rusted, brown, yellow, tan -
Sad, silent autumn leaves!

It is interesting to note that how the colours 'brown' and 'yellow' have degenerated and sad connotation. Perhaps in some other context, like the Sun's rays being 'yellow', the same colour would be celebrated instead of hopelessness engulfing it. The context determines the meaning. And above this, the million dollar question is: Why is the journey's end always been viewed so painfully?

Is this sadness because of the death which can pounce upon the victim anytime? Is it because the poet is afraid to go into the eternal darkness? The poet is sad for the silent leaves because they have lost something that they initially had; once, they waltzed with the wind. Something that we have and now has been taken away from us. Perhaps had there been no celebration of life in Spring time by the green leaves, the poet would have felt less sadness while looking at the decayed life. The beauty a heroine nurtures throughout her youth, leaves her lonelier once it fades. The companionship of words that a writer feels, is suddenly broken one day when those same words defy him or her. The confidence and vitality that a sportsperson experiences early in his life, is many a times

lost once when he grows old. He is no longer the same person. It is this loss, this betrayal, that increases the woe. We mortals too, ail and die. This adds pathos to the poet's mind. Sometimes death comes to take us slowly through the labyrinths of time, elongating the moment of misery into a long drawl. And sometimes, the whole game finishes with one last breath. With every creation the artist feels the same. Maybe this is my swan song. Maybe the fountain of talent would dry up after this. The poet is referring to the end of the Creative ability. The uncertainty of creativity; when would the next words overflow through the bower? The waiting itself resonates with death of poetic abilities.

There is no escapist tendency in Sinha's work though. She faces life with all its imperfections, expresses grief, undergoes the pain and yet stands still to let the music of life end. There is a certain restlessness in her with the approaching end. Yet unlike the Romantics, she lives in the present, recollecting the past glory. There is acceptance of the inevitable future. And like the Romantics, she weaves a beautiful yet lonely picture of nature with its flora and fauna. A unique quality of her poems is the use of nature imagery with a lot of colours and the use of transferred epithets wherein nature and the poet become one. This unity of the internal self with the external nature is the jewel of her writing. In this respect we can compare her with Shelley and Keats. She writes:

A slip into sepia, grey horizons,
No cerulean skies at eventide -
The fading fires of sunset vault:
Restless, dying autumn leaves!

Fossilized Words:

The poem 'Fossilized words' is another picture of desolation and sadness. The poet is completely at a loss to accept the inevitable. The 'dull evening', the setting 'Sun' and the 'sad songs of the stars' pushes the poet into further anguish. There is a meek attempt at waking up, but the effort does not bear any fruit. The reference here is to the advancing age. The dullness, the ache, the sadness is more because of the loss of youth than the approaching end. Death will put a final stop to the ramblings of the mind. But before the actual death, there is always a period of desperation.

Metaphorically, this depicts the journey of the poet. The creative stalk is fast depleting, the brooks are drying up and the poet is feeling a loss so deep, that it creates a sense of utter hopelessness.

Words freeze into silence
To get fossilized forever
In the closed chambers
Of the anguished heart!

The existence of the silenced words is in the close recesses of the poet's heart. It is no longer shared with anyone. Can 'fossils' be considered alive? Even though the fountain of creation has dried up, all is not dead. The preserved remains of ideas of the poet silhouette the corpse of creativity. The poet feels the immense loss. And the sad part is that there is room for only one person in the creative domain. The poet cannot share the anguish with his or her fellow-travelers.

Once Again:

The poem 'Once Again' canvasses 'the lost self,' the 'disconnectedness' the poet feels. She agonizes over the withered trees with black snake-like branches outside her window. 'Time's winged chariot' fast approaches and takes us away. The poet experiences fear and helplessness over the 'futile and erosive years' which are going to follow this unproductive stage. It is a compulsive thing; this writing business. One has to crystallize the thoughts and put them into words. Ranjana Sharan Sinha is reminiscent of the glory of the past:

The full moon of yesteryears
With its soft shimmering glow
Limps along the memory lane.

Just to remember those times is also an ache for the poet. It reminds her of the resplendent past glowing

with the promise of future. She asks 'Who can escape the natural process of aging? And we all know the answer.

The unique characteristic of the poem is the compensation the poet seeks in her soulmate, one who loves the sorrows of her changing face. His reassurances drive away her anxieties and reaffirm her faith in herself. This culmination of being into another is not found in other poems of Ranjana Sharan Sinha. It is as if she has found her anchor at last. Love doesnot change with the changing times. The power of creativity can ebb and flow, but goes on forever. It is the beacon light in the midst of the whirlwind of old age. Love juxtaposed with growth feels quite reassuring.

Valentine's Day at Sixty:

The title of the poem 'Valentine's Day at Sixty' is self-explanatory. There is love in the air on Valentine's Day. The vigour-charged air revitalizes the young and the old alike. But the poet laments the loss of passion on Valentine's Day which is supposed to ignite passion amongst the youngsters. All around the roses bloom, filling the air with its sweetness but the poet states that Spring does no longer fascinate her. She admits that nothing stirs within her bosom. There is fear again at the mere thought. The advancing years have robbed her of the precious emotion of love. Never again perhaps would she experience it. She uses the words 'sad', 'unhappy', 'gloom',

'beauty fades and flies', 'fleeting charm' with such sensitivity that the readers start empathizing with her.

The second part of the poem changes the mood. The poet is comforted. The whole pathos in the first part of the poem changes when all of a sudden she looks in her husband's star-like eyes. She gets a pleasant surprise. She is still loved and revered by her husband. His support and unconditional acceptance changes the mood of the poem. There is still hope!

Beauty is deeper than the skin

Love means staying together through thick and thin;

The poet concludes by the ever-optimistic lines of the great Victorian poet Robert Browning: 'Grow old along with me, the best is yet to be'. Slowly the colours of sadness get replaced by the rainbow. Old age no longer frightens her. She can accept it and live it fully with her life-partner by her side. She gets infused with his energy.

She's Gone Forever!

Perhaps this poem 'She's gone forever', is the jewel in the crown of Ranjana Sharan Sinha's array of poems. It truly and completely exhibits the trauma and the insecurities of a person and a poet also. The poet has reached a stage in life which is alien and strange. She is unable to understand its significance and necessity. In

such a condition, even the exuberance of nature is not able to comfort her anymore. She writes:

The scarlet gulmohars
With their flamboyant flames
Fall on the ground:
A sense of fall silently comes!

The images of nature, the smells and colours of the leaves and flowers and other natural objects have always fascinated the artists. But now these same images no longer comfort the anguished hearts. There is sudden panic and confusion, there are inner rumblings and a futile search.

The poet senses the end of her earthly existence from deep within where the tender and nostalgic feelings reside. She writes:

A boundless ocean forced along
By the winds of halcyon days,
Surges up within me,
Provoking nostalgia!

The poet is saddened by the remembrance of the past glory juxtaposed by the present condition of uncertainty. Now life is full of the 'to and fro' of emotions from the past to the present. The poet tries to remember herself; her lost self. She sees a woman without lines or signs of aging, vibrant and agile. The poet tries to hold her,

possess her, but feels the vain attempt more hurtful. She concludes:

My bygone days like
Pale, effervescent champagne
Hiss in the flute of
My advancing years,
Whispering with the mesmerising bubbles!

Oh how beautifully has this been expressed! Is it not felt by all at one point or the other? The sensitivity and transparency of the poet's soul is evident in these lines. Man wants to embrace perfection and immortality. What remains unfortunately is the crude reality of Time. It defeats the mighty as well as the meek.

The beauty of this poem lies in its varied interpretation. It is the expression of a person's anguish over getting old. It is also the regret of an artist whose youthful, vibrant self has gone away forever. Perhaps it will never come back to her. Even if it makes an occasional comeback, would it be of the same magnitude as her earlier self? The self image of the poet has suffered a blow. There is perhaps no reconciliation or solace. These emotions remind us of the earlier discussed poems. We can safely say that this forms the base of her writings.

Comments:

In the poem 'The true meaning of life' by Pat Fleming, a contemporary American poet, the poet accepts the limitations of old age and states:

But how much I reached out,
To others when needed,
Would be the true measure,
Of how I succeeded.

It reverberates the wise adage, that what you are is God's gift to you, and what you become is your gift to God. Every human being can find the true meaning of life in helping others in times of need. It is not what material progress that we have achieved but the place that we have created in others' hearts. Success can be measured thus. When we reach out to others, we create an indelible bond.

By being a sensitive and mature human being, Ranjana Sharan Sinha has given so much to mankind. Her expressions record the common everyday emotions of a multitude of human beings. And at the same time, they are a record of the personal anguish and condition of a mature poet. By reading these rumblings of her mind, people would find solace in them. They would feel that finally there is someone who has understood their plight; someone who has shown the path of seeking compensation in other human being. Her use of imagery and choice of setting

convey that the world of nature is not different than the man-made world. God has plans for all the living beings and Nature is a companion forever. In her poems, Nature has assumed a character of its own. The seasons mentioned are like human beings, with their set characteristics and emotions. The yellow Autumn with its woeful stillness reminds one of the helplessness of man in front of Time. We have to go away as our Time ends here. No amount of coaxing nor any accomplishments can prolong our stay here. Similarly, the art of any and every artist also has a lifespan. Art comes unannounced into the life of the artist, and departs on the wings of fancy suddenly one day, leaving the artist bereft and clueless. The fear of this condition plagues their heart constantly. It is a living death for the artist. And Ranjana Sharan Sinha has beautifully captured this fear in her poems.

References

Sinha, Ranjana Sharan. *Scents and Shadows*. Authorspress, 2019.

Sinha, Ranjana Sharan. *The Purple Jacaranda and other Poems*. Authorspress, 2020.