

Nature and Human Vulnerability in *Sea of Poppies*

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Abstract

Nature plays a major role in the globe both to the human beings as well to the non-human beings. It provides energy and medicine to human as well to the animals. Most of the Indian Families/ people rely on wood to meet their first energy needs, for an instance:

We are depending on natural medicines. In the name of Technological Development, we are destroying Mother Nature by chopping down our green lands (forests), overfishing our seas etc. Moreover we live in materialistic world, we run like a machine. Similarly human's health is important for survival. Here human's health is nothing but wheel. The wheel has 24 spokes which is related to 24 hrs. But we don't understand the importance of each spokes. In this current scenario human is not willing to live with Nature. They want to be marginalized hence nature also reacts accordingly. This paper shows the human devastation caused by Nature's wrath. The novel depicts the picture of devastation in nineteenth century colonialism ruined by the ecosystem of the fertile Nation. Indian peasants are compelled by the Britishers to yield opium in their fertile fields. Due to illiteracy and innocent they grew opium plants and it affects the human, nonhuman and also the aquatic beings

Key words: Nature, Opium, Human's Wrath vs. Nature's Wrath, Fertility.

Nature and Human Vulnerability in *sea of poppies*

Sea of poppies depicts the picture of human devastation caused by himself in the name of Imperialism. The novel *Sea of Poppies* throws the light on the colonial rule in India by the Britishers during nineteenth century. He thoroughly sets the picture on the market and the profit of opium with our neighbouring country China prior to the opium wars and our nation as the victim of land for their production. The novel opens with two incredible visions namely a tall masted ship, at sail on the Indian Ocean and well-formed agricultural crop, abundant flowers which is consistent of reaming the world. The symbolic representation of the "vessel" is seen as another life. The agricultural crop, the livelihood of protagonist Deeti and her neighbours, is the *Poppies*. The productive lands of the Gangetic plain are blossoming atmost with *poppies* which are beautiful yet deadly that deny the agricultures to grow their traditional crops for their survival.

Thomas G. DeLoughrey and George B. Handley's introduction: *Toward an Aesthetics of the Earth*.

It explores the postcolonial construction of the environment in literature from the nations like Africa and South Asia while considering, literary representations of Geography, it discusses about the postcolonial ecology as a critical engagement with an "aesthetics

of the earth". It also examines the geographical violence through that the virtually all the space in the world is explored, charted and finally brought under control. In the native, the history of colonial servitude is started up by the loss of locality to the outsider, it identifies the geography must be searched and might be restored (3).

In this novel, Amitav gosh gives us a glimpse that once the land has provided fertility, peace and happiness to all the peasants but now it has been swamped with the increasing tide of puppy seeds. The novel depicts the pathetic situation of the agricultures are constrained to supply their lands to opium production which causes the diseases like poverty and hunger. Before the colonialization people had nutritious food and health life but now they couldn't feed their children and their families on the whole they lived in harmony with nature. Due to this opium trade with china people lost their life. Now they are obliged to have a malnourishment by cultivating a single crop the monster called poppy.

The war between nature and human is seen in *Sea of Poppies*

The town was thronged with hundreds of other impoverished transients, many of whom were willing to sweat themselves half to death for a few handfuls of rice many of these people had been driven from their villages of flood of flowers...(202)

The Nature shows its anger to the victim and the protagonist Deeti. Deeti is married to Hukum Singh. They are no matched couple, under her brother Kesri Singh's compulsion and without her desire Deeti is pushed into the well. Hukum Singh was addicted with opium and also impotent. Therefore in the very might of their marriage her husband forced her to inhale opium and was raped by her own brother-in law Chandan Singh with the help of Byro Singh & her mother-in law. Finally her life is cursed and twined by opium. She lost her fertility and her cultivated land, she lost her crops like, wheat, vegetables, maize, masoor dhal with the harvest of poppy she is not able to meet the basic needs. Poverty is killing her family friends happened into debts. The author pathetically portrays the protagonist:

She gave in and agreed to place the impression of her thumb on the seth's account book, in exchange for six months work of wheat, oil and gush. Only as she was leaving did it occur to her... (p156).

In the ancient period farmers marginalized home - made "opium for their small society, which were to be used during minor illnesses at harvest & weddings (11) the remaining were sold to Patna 'Pykari' merchants"(20) During the spring season harvest will be done, Deeti recollects the past that the edible crops were grown and it not only gave them food but also the shelter like the straw is used for various purposes like making hut roofs. Her huts were hatched but now she does not have single money to buy straw. The Britishers made the natives helpless by increasing the cost of straw and due to the cultivation of opium they have to live their life with hunger or migrate to maturities. Deeti says:

"The hut's roof was urgent in need of repairs, but in this age of flowers, that was not easy to come by in the old days, the fields would be heavy with wheat in winter, after the spring harvest, the straw would be used to repair the damage of the year before. But now, with the sahibs forcing everyone to grow poppy, no one had hatch to spare...(p29)"

Gosh narrates that the people were not aware of the result of growing poppy plants. By growing the seeds the fertile land will be polluted, which turned into infertility. The protagonist Deeti lives in an ecological metaphor. Even in the opium factory people became the victim in the environment, they were not capable to inhale the fresh air, they suffocate to breath inside the factory Deeti sheds tears for her people, children who work in the factory restlessly. Almost the factory is polluted people live their life with polluted atmosphere:

“The air inside was hot and fetid, like that of a closed kitchen, except that the smell was not of spices and oil, but of liquid opium, ... “(94).

The nature shows its wrath not only to humans but also to animals, birds, rivers

Kalua feeds opium to his ox to relax for a while. As Kalua’s cart rolled on, towards the opium factory’s main compound, Deeti and Kabutri began to suffocate, they couldn’t breathe freely. The polluted land made them dangle in the air like a fog of snuff. The opium also effects the attitude of the monkeys lived near the Sudder opium factory is like that the other monkeys never chattered, they fought among themselves eh. Gosh writes:

“When they came down from the trees it was to lap at the open sewers that drained the factory’s effluents; after having sated their cravings, they would climb back into the branches to resume their stupefied scrutiny of the Ganga and its currents.” (91)

Mother Nature shows its wrath to the holy river Ganga. The holy river pollution and the wastages were stagnated into the river. Purity of river Ganga lost its impurity in the hands of humans. The holy rivers also become a victim to pollution. The author shows the nature’s wrath to aquatic beings like fish. The chemical effluents get into water later to aquatic atmosphere. It is also noted that the fish also became the tranquil effect of the monster opium. The result of opium cultivation and devastation of trees and plans are also depicted through the protagonist Deeti:

Ganga was joined by a lesser river, the Karamnasa. As witnessed by its name ‘destroyer of Karma’ this tributary of the holy river had an unfortunate reputation: it was said that the touch of its water could erase a lifetime of hard – earned merit (192).

Conclusion

In the name of development human destroys nature. They never see nature as mother. Nature nurtures human but human exploits their own mother nature either knowingly or unknowingly. Human’s vulnerability in growing poppy plants leads fertile land into infertile. In the materialistic world human ruins the agricultural land for the want of money. They want to be marginalized from the nature so as the nature.

Ones the human character is lost it cannot be retrieved likewise the infertile land cannot be turned into fertile land. We live in an age where we buy mineral water that contains no minerals. During the COVID-19 Pandemic, we experienced something we might have not thought – we had to buy Oxygen to survive. In the name of urbanisation, fertile agricultural lands are being destroyed and converted into plots and buildings. Land that once grew food, flowers, seeds, fruits and now grows concrete. If this continues, the future is predictable, in the next 5-10 decades Oxygen may no longer be free. Breathing could become a paid guest not a natural friend. If the human became the victim before the eyes of Mother Nature the human must face the Nature’s disastrous like Earthquake, Tsunami and CORONA. Hence, we must live with Mother Nature instead exploit Her (Mother Nature)

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