

Eco-Psychological Reading of Mahjoor's Poetry

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Abstract

Eco-psychology studies the relationship between human beings and the natural world through ecological and psychological principles. The study seeks to develop and understand ways of expanding the emotional connection between individuals and the natural world, thereby assisting individuals with developing sustainable lifestyle and remedying alienation from nature. Theodore Roszak is credited with coining the term in his book *The Voices of the Earth* (1992). The central premise of Ecopsychology is which Roszak defines, "that while today the human mind is affected and shaped by modern social world, its deep structure is inevitably adapted to, and informed by, the more –than-human natural environment in which it evolved". Thus Eco-psychology explores how to develop emotional bonds with nature. When nature is explored and viewed without any judgement, it gives sensations of harmony, balance, timelessness, and stability.

Mahjoor belongs to Mitriham, a very picturesque village of Kashmir. Landscapes in Kashmiri literature always have a special significance as the landscape of valley differs from the landscape of rest of the India, because of its icy winters and pleasant summers. Nature is the main theme and concern of Mahjoor's poetry. He loved his place and believed that natural landscapes play an important role in shaping a particular ecosystem. Snow clad mountains are the source of water for lakes and streams and those streams irrigate different fields and that is how this harmony goes on. His valley is home to thousands of birds, animals, leopards, snow bears etc. Kashmir is a central figure in Mahjoor's poetry. Mahjoor not only presents the beautiful aspect of nature, but also associates his emotions with it.

KEYWORDS: Ecopsychology, Nature, Man, Landscapes, Ecology, Alienation, Relationship

Introduction

Natural landscapes play a vital role in nature poetry. The distinctiveness and character of landscapes helps to define a sense of place at both local and regional levels. Landscapes provide poets with pleasant surroundings and amenity. Mountains, rivers, lakes not only give solace and peace to one's mind, but they play an important role in human survival also. Life on earth is possible only because of this non-human nature, which is a part of the human world. Eco-psychology by and large is concerned with the relationship between humans and the natural world through ecological and psychological principles. The study seeks to develop and understand ways of expanding the emotional connection between individuals and the natural world, thereby assisting individuals with developing sustainable lifestyle and remedying alienation from nature. Nature plays an important role in establishing a healthy relationship between man and the ecosystem

Ecological Psychology as discussed by Winter, D.D. in his book, *Ecological Psychology: Healing the Split between Planet and Self*, “as the study of human experience and behaviour in, its physical, political, and spiritual context, in order to build sustainable world”(2). Winter offers principle in relation to ecological psychology, as follows “ the goal of ecological psychology is to learn how to develop a sustainable culture; the psychical world exists, whether we understand it or not; our knowledge of reality is continually changing as our political, emotional, and intellectual knowledge changes; and the connections between systems are more important than their separations” (298). It shows that environmental psychology focuses on environmental influences on human experience. In contrast, human influences on the environment, such as factors that affect behaviour towards the environment and encourage humans to be proactive to the environment.

Theodore Roszak, is considered as the first generation or the pioneer of Ecopsychology. This first generation of Ecopsychology is spearheaded by T. Roszak, M. Gomes, A. Kanner, and R. Greenway. Ecopsychology in the first generation concentrates on the danger of disconnection between human and nature and how to restore human’s concern about the nature and environment. Second generation of Ecopsychology emerges in the 2000s. At this time, there are Ecopsychologists, e.g Fisher, Merrit, Vakoch, and Antonov. Ecopsychology at this time concentrates more on the segmentation of Ecopsychology and therapeutic practice research. In the second generation of Ecopsychology that is called the period of Ecopsychology development, multicultural Ecopsychology emerges. Anthony and Soule assert that multicultural Ecopsychology is a diversity of Ecopsychology in relation to social justice and environmental justice that creates harmony on earth. As a new discipline in psychology, Ecopsychology is categorized as an interdisciplinary discipline because it combines psychology and ecology in understanding the environment. As there are many studies about Ecopsychology, there are also journals about Ecopsychology as follows. Ecopsychology concentrates on articles about (1) physical and mental health benefits of interacting with nature; (2) biophilia; (3) ecotherapy; (4) the psychology of environmental destruction; (5) science, technology, and the depth of experience with nature; (6) the rediscovery of the wild; (7) urban sustainability; (8) indigenous cultures; (9) responsibility for protecting natural places and other species; and (10) human-animal interaction. *European Journal of Ecopsychology (EJE)* appears in 2010. EJE concentrates on articles about (1) effects of the natural environment on our emotions and well-being; (2) how psychological disconnection relates to the current ecological crisis; and (3) furthering our understanding of psychological, emotional and spiritual relationships with nature.

Mahjoor belongs to Mithram, a very picturesque village of Kashmir. Landscapes in Kashmiri literature always have a special significance as the landscape of valley differs from the landscape of rest of the India, because of its icy winters and pleasant summers. Nature is the main theme and concern of Mahjoor’s poetry. He loved his place and believed that natural landscapes play an important role in shaping a particular ecosystem. Snow clad mountains are the source of water for lakes and streams and those streams irrigate different fields and that is how this harmony goes on. His valley is home to thousands of birds, animals, leopards, snow bears etc. Kashmir is a

central figure in Mahjoor's poetry. Mahjoor not only presents the beautiful aspect of nature, but also associates his emotions with it.

Mahjoor's in his collection of ghazals, "The Nightingale's Tale" depicts a morning scene in a garden, addressing a rose to rise from the deep slumber and enjoy the melodious songs of Nightingale, Cuckoo, and Mynah. All the creatures of the garden are opening their eyes to welcome the sun, whose presence makes the life possible on earth:

Arise early o garden rose
the day has dawned
inebriate eyes and listen to
the nightingales beautiful song
O my drowsy darling wake up
The cuckoo's mellifluous voice
And the melody of mynah
Ring out in the wood land. (1-8)

The next four lines describe the scene in the garden where narcissus (yamberzal), which declares the spring in Kashmir. It is the first flower that blooms after the harsh winter is out, and is a symbolic flower of Kashmiri aesthetics as it is believed to have a shape of eye but is lightless. The flower is usually used by Kashmiri poets as a symbol of new life. Mahjoor also believes that this flower signifies the arrival of spring. The flower is ready to offer her nectar to beetle, "the narcissus has bedecked the / Sanctum of its eyes/ and filled goblets with wine" (9-10). The mood of the poet throughout the poem is joyful. Poet forgets every tension in the company of nature. Nature always gives him a message of hope and aspiration. Nishat Ansari, a great poet of Kashmir in his essay, "Mahjoor" in Sheeraze comments on Mahjoor's love for his land:

Mahjoor's attachment to his local environment later on developed into his passionate love for his homeland and his Kashmiri compatriots which made him the first ever patriotic Kashmiri poet who passionately sang in praise of his birth place. In his every poem we see Kashmir, fauna and flora its birds its magical waters. He rapturously expresses his love for his flowerful birthplace. His love for his place makes him poet of the valley. (26)

Deep ecologists believe that the wellbeing and flourishing of human and non-human life on earth is the ultimate secret of harmony. The bud is mum and the rose is ready to diffuse its smell in the garden. It means nature is always humble and soft. The last stanza of the poem is very philosophical. Mahjoor calls morning breeze "you are from heaven" and there is a secret message which the breeze whispers in the ears of flowers that is why they smile. He now turns to himself to know the secret which breeze

whispers to the flowers. Mahjoor like Wordsworth and Emerson believes a heavenly presence in the world of nature.

In Mahjoor's poem "Rose of Nishat Garden" the poet gives the description of the famous garden of Kashmir and addresses the rose as "O-rose of Nishat garden/come play the coquette/come laughing and let your" (1-3). The beautiful gardens and streams, the snow covered mountains, lush green meadows, lapping waters, chirping of birds act as impetus to a man of creative writings. Mahjoor's poems have high description of beautiful places of Kashmir, like Gulmarg, Sonmarg, Dal Lake, Nishat garden etc. Mahjoor was a Patwari by profession and got a chance to visit every corner of the valley. In the opening scene poet addresses a rose of Nishat Garden to "come and play with the narcissus as it offers its nectar in the goblets"(4). The garden is full of life and mirth. The narcissuses are offering wine to the beetles and the roses are diffusing their smell. In the next four lines the poet suggests the rose to visit the Shalimar garden through Dal in a boat. Last line of this stanza evokes a sense of belongingness to the place. "Cross the Dal in a boat/ and enjoy yourself in Nishat and Shalimar garden/they are as beautiful as my two eyes" (5-7). Mahjoor describes his love for the place very profoundly. Nature to Mahjoor is not mere fascination but a presence of which he is a part. He describes true solitude as going out into nature and leaving behind all preoccupying activities as well as society. The strong sense of spirit of the place evoked by his poetry continues to arouse responsive chords in the contemporary readers. Eco-Psychologists, like Theodore Roszak in *New Therapy: Bio-Science* advocates that "while today the human mind is affected and shaped by the modern social world, its deep structure is inevitably adopted to, and informed by, the more than human natural environment in which it is evolved"(45). Mahjoor advocates like an eco-psychologist that nature is the best friend and companion and helps people to get back in touch with the natural world. To him nature is not just beautiful but is living and soothing. He believes in the sublime effect of nature.

Mahjoor in his famous poem, "Dawn" describes an advent of dawn casting light on all mountain tops. The poem is highly imaginative. The poet is optimistic in his tone describing the morning time in the happy Valley. The poem gives a description of dawn when sun rays fall on snow clad mountains, the whole valleys looks golden, "The sun is casting its glow on/The horizons. Hills and mountains/Ranges are shining in the light" (2-4). The poem epitomizes the poets dream of happy world, free from misery and exploitation.

The "Dawn" is a dream of freedom, which every Kashmiri is waiting. The rule of lords and Maharaja's will be over and the gardens be free and peaceful. "Autumn, spring will come and/ hold a inquiry. Those that/ have borne the brunt, will blossom again" (11-13). Mahjoor points to commodification of nature at the hands of Imperialists. Not only Socio-cultural fabric of the colonized society is changed but it results in cascading effect on the whole environment:

Tulips shall kindle love torches

Their glow will brighten the sky

The iris shall pour the
Dewy brew into glasses
The sunflower filled plates
Gold coins this wealth it got. (17-22)

“Spring” by Mahjoor gives a message of refreshment in the month of April. The winter is over and the valley is looking like a bride in colourful wedding dress and this atmosphere is trying to shake off the shrouds of dead so that they may again put on the attire of life. “The Shaking off their shrouds the /gain put on the attire of life/ those struck down by ailments” (13-15). He feels a spiritual presence of divine in nature. Every year springs come and with its magical touch regenerates life back to earth. The poet very beautifully describes the birth of a new life:

Now you are the reigning monarch
And flowers pay tribute to you
You enforce your own laws
Throughout the garden alleys
Tongue tied by winter’s fury
Birds again start warbling. (33-38)

Through his art of description he sends a message of hopefulness and optimism to his countrymen. In the last stanza the poet thanks spring for refreshing his heart, “Garden of Mahjoor’s heart/ also bloomed when you came/ the buds had been waiting” (53-55).

“Our Country is a Garden” by Mahjooris a declaration as the poet addresses every creature of nature that their valley is a paradise on earth. He feels that the birds, flowers, insects, all believe that the valley is a beautiful garden, because the snow clad mountains, surround the land, with lakes in the middle, tulips blossoming in Shalimar garden, the hill streams, waterfalls, springs create a magical music. He had a great love for the places in Kashmir. DodaPatheri a beautiful place, covered with snow-capped mountains, lush green forests and a beautiful stream flowing in between. SokaNaag, is a spring on a mountain surrounded by snow, and cedar trees. TosiMaidan, is a meadow surrounded by lush green forests. Gulmarg a meadow in between lush green forests. Mansbal is famous for its beautiful lake. All are the places of enchanting beauty and together make this valley a garden of perfect beauty. “Hyacinth tells the violet to shed/ woodland isolation and come to the garden” (3-4). The poet is happy because the feudal rule is over. The people of Kashmir who lived a simple life in between the mountains and rivers are now free. They can enjoy the bliss of being one with nature. Their land is offering them a beautiful world of nature, where every creature is happy, the bulbul, the hyacinth, the violet, the snow clad mountains, the lakes, the hill streams and the woodlands. In the last two lines Mahjoor gives a message that the world of nature is beautiful and every human being should learn a lesson of freedom and love from nature:

The Lolab valley, its sylvan hills and
Woods bring dead back to life
Bathe in the sin water, meditate at
Manasbal and seem God in Harmukh
Bulbul hankers after roses bee after
The narcissus. Kashmiris are deep drunk
O Mahjoor! Our land is a darling,
sweet garden. We should love it. (27-33)

“Arise, o Gardner,” is a poem of great fame as it is metaphoric in meaning. Mahjoor creates a situation as if the landscapes, birds, flowers, animals, lakes are a family and man is in its center. The poet wishes his garden to be beautiful and green forever. So, he requests every member of this family to live in harmony with each other: “Dew bemoans the garden/desolation. Harassed roses have/ torn their garments. Infuse” (5-7). The poet emphasizes the smooth and lovely relationship between the geographical and natural landscapes of his place. Mahjoor’s ecological concern seems echoing the great American traveller, George Catlin’s concept of a magnificent park, “. . . that would not only protect non-human nature but would be a place where the world could see for ages to come, the native Indian in his classical attire, galloping his wild horse . . . A nation’s park, containing man and beast, containing all the freshness of their nature’s beauty” (142). Mahjoor believes a world, where man and nature live together in conformity and unity. Through the art of poetry he presents myriads of deep ecological concerns in pursuit of the ecological balance between nature and man and even the human beings themselves.

The study made so far proves, beyond doubt that literature can make positive contributions towards the awareness of the environment around. It offers a canvas where man and nature should live in harmony with each other and develop a stress free bond, which is core concern of Eco-psychology .

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