



Decolonizing Nature: Need for Reconsideration of Rural and Natural Values

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Abstract

***Aim:** The present paper aims at surveying and analyzing the absurd mentality and selfishness of human beings to have been deforesting, over-exploiting land and landscapes and colonizing nature for their selfish motifs and facing resultant consequences and repercussions in manifold and multifaceted forms of epidemics, pandemics, pestilences and disasters not only in their own lives but also in those of others- both humans and non-humans. Decolonizing Nature: Need for Reconsideration of Natural and Rural Values metaphorises the process of how to*

re-construct, re-build and re-create an environmental friendly ecosystem for the collective good for humans and non-humans alike, promoting 'Green Perspectives' and ecological consciousness so as to have lifeline (Oxygen) for life with minimum hurdle and harshness.

Approach: *The present research paper undergoes the impressionistic writing approach emphasizing and relying on subjective view-point with general survey dating back to Jean Jacques Rousseau to the modern, critical and catastrophic times created by Covid-19 pandemic via neoclassical nature with romantic one.*

Outcome: *Through the impressionistic writing approach, keeping in mind the intertextual concept of T. S. Eliot, I have tried my level best to establish a creative-connecting link between the nature ideology of Rousseau to extant global conditions via neoclassical authors, pre-romantic and romantic poets. Thus, it may be endorsed that 'Decolonizing Nature' is not a new concept. It may be said to have dated back to ever since of human Genesis. Here we would date back to Rousseau to the present environmental surroundings.*

Conclusion: *To sum up, for Jean Jacques Rousseau, Nature meant for freedom leading to social justice which neoclassicists metaphorised nature as the slavish imitation of the rules and legislations of the classical ancients, especially those of Latin writers. The Pre-Romantic and the Romantic poets, Wordsworth, in particular, presented nature not only possessed of healing, calming, balming, and therapeutic powers but also possessed of spiritual ones. Both of them have become the dire requirements and requisitions of life and time in the existing scenario. Wordsworthian approach has to be possessed along with reconsideration of rural and natural values for safe, sound, stronger and healthier longevity of life for both humans and non-humans alike.*

Keywords: Rousseau, decolonizing nature, green perspectives, naturopathy empowerment, green perspectives, pandemics, connecting links, etc.

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No 'Nature', no 'Life',
Absurdly creating hype,
Projecting themselves as 'Big Brothers',
The greatest fools of 'Homo erectus'.

(Self-composed lines)

T. S. Eliot (1888-1965), known as the signature authority as a poet, playwright and critic of the 20th century, emphasised the confluence of 'Tradition and Individual talent'. Here 'Tradition' metaphorises 'pastness of the past' or historical context of literature while 'Individual Talent' stands for the capability or sensibility of an artist or a poet to retouch, recolour, retweet, recast, rewrite or retell the tradition. Here T. S. Eliot signals a comparative survey of the tradition and historicity of literature to re-create and rewrite a new entity. He is of the view that new writers create nothing new. They create only intertextual and new historicist works by retouching and recolouring the tradition- intentionally or unintentionally. He views that an artist or a poet can never become a good artist or a poet without the employment of sense and signification of historical context of literature or traditional viewpoint. He says that, without the inclusion of pastness of the past in their re-creation, an artist or a poet would find himself in creative vacuum or literary emptiness.

Keeping in mind the intertextual concept of T. S. Eliot, I have tried my level best to establish a creative-connecting link between the nature ideology of

Rousseau to extant global conditions via neoclassical authors, pre-romantic and romantic poets. Thus, it may be endorsed that ‘Decolonization of Nature’ is not a new concept. It may be said to have dated back to ever since of human Genesis. Here we would date back to Rousseau to the present environmental surroundings.

Rousseau and Nature

“Rousseau was born at Geneva, Switzerland, but he is always classed among French writers” (Hudson 137). His political philosophy influenced the progress of the Enlightenment throughout Europe and aspects of the French Revolution, and the development of the modern political, economic, and educational thought’ (britannica.com). The concept of ‘noble savage’ was propounded by Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778). According to it, Rousseau’s natural man knew neither vice nor virtue. Such man used to live a carefree, happy and solitary life in the close contact of nature. In the state of nature, human beings would be self-contented and loved their selves known as self-preservation along with feelings for others as well. He was of the view that modern man’s disenfranchisement and subjection to his own requirements and requisitions is responsible for all sorts of social ills and evils, from their colonization, exploitation and dehumanisation by the power dynamics to their poor self-esteem and depression. He viewed their good and welfare with good governance. According to him, a good government must provide them freedom, their most fundamental birthright and objective. His foundation principle in his book *The Social Contract* was “man is born free but he is everywhere in chains.” For Rousseau, nature metaphorised “liberty, equality, and the rights of man ...” (Hudson 137). It has been well said: “At the beginning of all revolution men hope, for they think of all that mankind may gain new world; in its next phase they fear, for they think of what may mankind may lose” (Albert 289).

Neoclassicists and Nature

The neoclassicists- John Dryden (1631-1700), Alexander Pope (1688-1744), and Samuel Johnson (1709-1784)- “were successfully the dictators of English Letters and under their leadership, the heroic couplet became the fashion of poetry” (Long 304). It is better to differentiate ‘Neoclassical nature and Romantic nature’ before we proceed towards our main motif. ‘Neoclassical nature and Romantic Nature’ stand for ‘argument versus feeling’ respectively. For neoclassicists, nature stood for ‘decorum, precision, accuracy, reserve, common sense, formality and a thorough recognition of proprieties’ (Hudson 136). It was the slavish imitation of the rules and legislations invented and established by the ancient classicists in particular by the Latin writers, and ‘humble imitation of the style of the Latin classics’ (Albert 157).

In 1709, Walsh wrote to Pope: “The best of the modern poets in all languages are those that have nearest copied the ancients,” he expressed concisely the principle of classicism; and this principle Pope himself reiterated in some well known lines in his *Essay on Criticism*:

Those rules of old discovered, not devised;

Are Nature still, but Nature methodised;

...

To copy Nature is to copy them. (Hudson 114)

Some of the rules in neoclassical literature, especially in poetry were evolved, along with slavish imitation of the ancients by the neoclassical writers as we have already cited. They believed in the principle of ‘Be Correct.’ For them ‘Correctness’ means avoidance of enthusiasm; moderate opinions moderately expressed strict care and accuracy in poetical technique... (Albert 157). Simply speaking, ‘Nature’ for the neoclassicists was nothing but the slavish imitation of the rules and norms, formality, precision, decorum, and accuracy of the classicists, especially of the Latin writers unlike the Romantic nature-clouds, sea, air, mountains, rural backdrops, and pasteurality in life.

Pre-Romanticists and Nature

Pre-romanticists were also known as precursors or pioneers to the romantic revival/romantic movement in English poetry. They were Thomas Gray, William Collins, William Cowper, Robert Burns, Oliver Goldsmith and George Crabbe; etc. They were more romantic in their themes and motifs and less classical in their presentation or in other words they were an amalgamation of both classicism and romanticism. Although under the dictator leadership of English Letters-Dryden, Pope and Johnson- “literature, poetry in particular became satiric of critical in spirit, and formal in expression, a new romantic movement quietly made its appearance”. “James Thomson’s *Seasons* (1730) was the noteworthy poem of the romantic revival... and was a revelation of the natural wealth and beauty” (Long 304-05). His *Seasons*, a descriptive poem in four parts (1726-30), belongs in many ways to the Augustan school... (Hudson 167). The poem is chiefly written in blank verse wherein Thomson’s vision of nature is very harsh, especially in winter but it lays stress on the ‘pure pleasure of rural life and landscape’ with no denial of pain this pleasure can involve (Carter 173). Thomson views the negative aspects of philosophic melancholy which is very much of its own time. Many traces of similarities and parallelisms may be drawn between him and Keats’ sensuous perceptions in poetry. In my comprehension and insights, the poem seems to present a better natural milieu, making it eco-friendly better than that of Wordsworth. In modern Covid-19 vocabulary, the poem may be assumed to have immunising, revitalising and renovating power which is the dire need of the whole globe. Work from home culture is being promoted to safeguard life from the muting enemy. In such trials and tribulation, pains and pangs, and rough and tough times nature and naturopathy remain better options for human beings because they have less and less side effects like that of allopathy. How relevant Thomson’s *Seasons* is in such crucial times!

Let's have a glimpse of the winter part of the poem to assess and sense the therapeutic effects of nature:

Killing infectious damp, and the spent air

Storing afresh with elemental life.

...

All nature feels the renovating force

Of winter, only to the thoughtless eye

In ruin seen.

(‘Winter,’ *Seasons* by James Thomson)

From James Thomson's *Seasons* onwards, love of nature and “a life affirming reconsideration of rural values” (Carter 174) “became increasingly prominent in [English] poetry” (Hudson 168). Thomas Gray's *Elegy*- simple and short annals of the poor- is a realistic and picturesque presentation of rural backdrop of England. It is a paramount example of Pre-romantic poetry and became hugely popular and even today its rural pictoriality and pastoralism spells magic effect on readers and listeners alike. Let's see how pertinent and suggestive the following poetic lines are! “Full many a gem of purest ray serene / The dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear: / Full many a flower is born to blush unseen / And waste its sweetness on the desert air” (Lall 130). “Gray's *Elegy* can be recited as a poem *against* mourning, anticipating Wordsworth's concern with agricultural and agrarian life and useful labour finding meaning in the life lived rather than in the death feared” (Cater 175).

Apart from Thomson's *Seasons* and Gray's *Elegy*, others poetic pieces of Pre-romantic period also try to endorse the concept and need for reconsideration of rural values or pastoral culture in the close embraces of nature perennial source of health and happiness. Oliver Goldsmith's *The Deserted Village* (1770), William Collins' *Ode to Evening* (1746), William Cowper's *The Task* (1785), and George Crabbe's narrative poems of rural life- *The Village* (1783), and *The*

Borough (1810) do promote more or less the same concept and concern because natural lands and landscapes, pictures and their pictoriality, clouds, birds, rivers, animals and bio-diversity, greenery and scenes thereof spell soothing, calming and therapeutic influences on human life. All these poems indirectly or thematically suggest migration from urbanity to rurality.

Romanticists and Nature

Victor Hugo defines Romanticism as ‘liberalism in literature’-(Long 305)- a simple expression of life as seen by imagination-returning to nature and plain humanity for its material. Romantic writers, especially poets –William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Robert Southey (Senior Romanticists) and John Keats, Percy Bysshe Shelley and George Gordon Byron (Junior Romanticists) are given great importance in English poetry. The romantic period in English literature starts with the publication of *Lyrical Ballads* (1798), a landmark of English poetry, and ends with the death of Sir Walter Scott and the enactment of the *First Reform Bill* by the English Parliament in 1832. Carter writes: “The Romantic period was an era in which a literary revolution took place alongside social and economic revolutions. In some histories of literature, the Romantic period is called the ‘Age of Revolution’” (193).

In current scenario (March2020 onwards) Covid-19 virus with its mutants has been influencing population of cities and metros more than that of rural backdrop living in and around natural orbits and surroundings. The world has seen fewer casualties and death tolls in natural and rural surroundings than those of urban surroundings. This is because of the therapeutic and naturopathic impacts and influences of green surroundings and eco-friendly atmosphere in country scenario. Automatically speaking, number and density of trees in country and wild life remains larger and higher than that of urban milieu producing more and more oxygen, the lifeline humans and non-human alike. Less population from villages was found on ventilators and on oxygen cylinders than urban population.

So now return to nature and tradition has become a dire need of life and time for healthful longevity. That's why more and more plantation is not only to be promoted but also to be embraced like lovers and concretization of land and colonization of green life are to disheartened and reduced. *World Environment Day* on 5th June every year is to be implemented in reality as parents are willingly ready to safeguard their children against all sorts of dangers- natural, human or non-human. Trees are not to be considered as children but also to be felt and owned as children.

Since it is known to most of men of letters, and even to casual readers that literature aims at providing re-creation and entertainment like celluloid world. Poetry aims at providing sonorous beauty to readers resulting into therapeutic effects and spiritual pleasure. Wordsworth, the worshipper and true priest of nature, ranks at the top of them because of the therapeutic effects of nature in his poetry. His poems provide not only outward beauty but also states of feelings and of thought coloured by feeling and sentiments under the excitement of beauty. A sensitive and sensible mind can draw pleasure and excitement, and inward joy from poetic readings, especially from close textual readings.

In case of the Romantic poets, especially in that of Wordsworth, "the feeling for nature rises to a passionate veneration that is love and religion too" (Albert 290). Wordsworth got fed up with dazzling life of over money making of the over amplification and glorification of gross mundane materialism caused by the Industrial Revolution, killing and reducing the balming, calming and therapeutic influences from the life of man. Fed up with the gross materialism of humanity, he wished to prefer to live in close embrace of nature. Nature was the teacher, nurse, mother, caretaker and friend for him. W. J. Long writes about educational, therapeutic, and moral impressions of nature felt by Wordsworth in his own life:

...the unroofed school of nature attracted him more than the discipline of the classes, and he learned more eagerly from flowers and hills, and stars than from his books; one must read Wordsworth's own record, in *The Prelude*, to appreciate this. These things in this poem must impress even the casual reader: First, Wordsworth loves to be alone, and is never lonely, with nature, second, like every other child who spends much time alone in the woods and fields; he feels the presence of some living spirit, real though unseen, and companionable though silent; and third, his impressions are exactly like our own, and delightfully familiar. (378)

French Revolution (written in 1804) attempts to recapitulate the emotions and sentiments of enthusiastic supporters of the French Revolution (1789) at its commencement. Wordsworth himself was one of its great supporters. He landed in Calais on the 13th July 1790, on the eve of the first anniversary of the fall of the Bastille. The whole nation was wrought with excitement, and rejoicing and Wordsworth witnessed scenes of wonderful enthusiasm among people all around. Let us see how happily he writes: "Bliss was it in that dawn to be alone/But to be young was very heaven" (Wordsworth 201-02).

In *The World is too Much with us*, he sheds tears at the gross material mentality of the people of his age and shares his agony and disillusionment at their amassing wealth and spending the same at all hours of the day giving no attention to Nature. In such heavily heart-felt time he wishes to get to nature for solace and peace. He writes: "The world is too much with us; late and soon / Getting and spending, we really waste our part powers / Little we see in Nature that is ours" (191).

There is no denying the fact that nature had been, it is and it would be in the humans and non-humans alike. Let's have a look at his beautiful nature lyric entitled "My Heart Leaps up": "My heart leaps up when I behold / A rainbow in

the sky / So was it when my life began / So is it know I am a man / Or be it when I shall grow old / Or let me die.”

The same inspiration he draws from natural, especially ‘vernal wood’ scenery and asserts and makes the world aware of therapeutic and calming senses and services of nature. It is the best and trustworthy teacher to the world superseding even the researching and exploring sages and saints about it. For the poet, books are not possessed of healing spirit for humanity. They are barren leaves. That’s why he tries to metaphorise the world to follow and enjoy natural surroundings indicating his friend who might have been a book worm. For the poet even a bird, especially linnet and Nightingale, was a source of joy and inspiration. Let’s have a look at another nature lyric entitled *The Table Turned*: “One impulse from the vernal wood / May teach you more of man / Of moral good and evil / than all the sages can.”

Wordsworth’s another best known nature lyric entitled *Daffodils* provides almost the same eco-friendly and humanitarian message to the world, evincing the picture of perennial source of joy and jollity. A. C. Bradley calls this poem a ‘pretty thing.’ Nature’s memories and impressions remained in life for long. He saw the daffodils in 1802 and must have often sought solace in recollecting them in imagination in hours of weariness and tedium. But he composed this poem only in 1804. This may be possible by soothing, healing, balming and therapeutic influences of daffodils.

To Wordsworth, Nature is not only a procession of season and seasonal fruition: it is the eye of all things, natural, and supernatural, into which the observant soul can peer and behold the spirit that inhabits all things. Nature, thus, amplified and glorified, it is to be sought, not only in the flowers and the fields, but also in “the light of setting suns / And the round ocean and the living air, / And blue sky, and in the mind of man” (*Tintern Abbey*). It is *Tintern Abbey* that

we see for the first time William Wordsworth as ‘a worshipper of nature.’ Margaret Drabble writes:

It is not the first poem to show his sense of the importance of natural surroundings—other poems show his first-hand knowledge of country life, with its beauties and hardships. But it is *Tintern Abbey* that shows for the first time his romantic passion for nature, and in which he gives us highly emotional description of the effects of the outer world upon his own inner self; this is the first poem in which he used, with deep feeling, phrases like ‘a worshipper of nature,’ and speaks of ‘the deeper zeal of holier love’ that he feels for nature. (Drabble 71-72)

According to Wordsworth, a human may betray the other but it is nature that is always genuine and never betrays anyone who loves and cares it: “Nature never betrays the heart that loved her.” F. W. H. Myers writes about Wordsworth’s strong faith in nature: “The Lines written above Tintern Abbey have become, as it were, the *locus classicus* or consecrated formula of the Wordsworthian faith” (Myers 33).

Justification

If the world becomes Wordsworthian in its approach, much natural crisis of this green planet would automatically lessen and reduced. But alas! We are still neoclassical nature following fads and fashions facing fatal forecasts and fatalities. I mean when the poet, in the 19th century, provided the follow ups of nature, natural plantation and habitats of it, why is the world today ignoring his message believing in natural colonization and its concretization? If not today, then never! The whole world has been and is facing multifaceted and manifold problems because of its nature negligence in the guises of pollution, pandemics and disasters. Needless to say, of winter pollution, even in the hot seasons much portion of the world is facing, feeling, watching and inhaling impure air claiming millions of lives per annum. Carbon emission is not a less dangerous challenge

than pandemics for the world populace and bio-diversity. China alone is emitting largest amount of carbon dioxide in the world under over expectation of colonization while some other countries like America, Russia, France, Germany, India and other ones are also playing their villainous role in this discipline. Plantation, its protection and proliferation is the only solution such natural hazards and disasters. That's why my humble request and suggestion to the world and to its fake and propagandist nature lovers is to plant more and more trees.

Conclusion

To sum up, for Jean Jacques Rousseau, Nature meant for freedom leading to social justice which neoclassicists metaphorised nature as the slavish imitation of the rules and legislations of the classical ancients, especially those of Latin writers. The Pre-Romantic and the Romantic poets, Wordsworth, in particular, presented nature not only possessed of healing, calming, balming, and therapeutic powers but also possessed of spiritual ones. Both of them have become the dire requirements and requisitions of life and time in the existing scenario. Wordsworthian approach has to be possessed along with reconsideration of rural and natural values for safe, sound, stronger and healthier longevity of life for both humans and non-humans alike.

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