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A Study of Louise Erdrich's Tracks: Androcentric and Eco feministic Perspectives

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Abstract

Louise Erdrich's Tracks (1988) reflects the effects of literature on human beings and presents the phenomenon in which the human, particularly, a man influences the nature including plants, animals, earth and all others things of the nature, are the victims of patriarchal sovereignty over nature, in general and over women, in particular. The whole world which is considered sane, simple, natural, peaceful and fertile, is facing environmental related issues and problems after androcentric control over the world either economically, socially or digitally. Purpose of this paper is to deconstruct it androcentric ally and ecofeministically and to show their effects in constructing or undermining the natural balance in the world. It is clear and imminent threat for the natural world as well as for the human beings whose' every activity on mother earth as mentioned by Rousseau, polluting the whole things of the world. The consideration of human as the super species in the world is great havoc, not only for the nature but also for the woman who is also considered like nature, the part of nature to flourish the world. The Eco critical theory presents that the activities of the human beings affect the environment and are affected by the environment in turn. The human beings, considering themselves as the super creature, exploit and use all the natural things of the nature for the fulfillment of their personal needs at the cost of destruction of these natural things. The present article uses the Eco critical theory to delineate the androcentric effects on the nature and also explains how women are influenced and affected by the patriarchal activities, done in the

natural environment in the name of progress and advancement. Women and all the natural things are used and misused by the men to have their desires fulfilled as they consider themselves, the monarch, to govern over the nature and the others.

Keywords: Androcentric, Nature, Others, Ecocide, Patriarchal, Matriarchal, Anthropocentrism.

Introduction

The nature is considered the center of all things in the universe in Eco critical theory and the supremacy of men over nature and living and non-living things is related to androcentric term. Eco criticism examines the apprehensions related to deforestation, distinction of wildlife, abundant use of natural resources for their own benefits either permanent or temporal, pollution of all kinds due to human activities, come under this head. The relationship between human and non-human in literature is discussed and it will also investigate the results of actions, perpetrated by the men in the natural environment. It will also express that all the non-human world like plants, animals, birds, water, air have equal importance in the nature. Both human and non-human are interrelated and their impact upon each other is studied in the theory. The bond between man and nature is vital but man is considered as the Centre of all the things of the universe because of his thinking power which gives him superiority over other things and in this way man's actions affect the nature so the discussion of relationships between man and nature and their impacts upon each other, is the culminated aim of this theory as Cheryl Glatfelter defines criticism in 1996.

"The study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment. Just as feminist criticism examines language and literature from gender-conscious perspective, and Marxist criticism brings as awareness of modes of production and economic class to its reading of texts, Eco criticism takes an earth-centered approach to literary" (18).

The relationships between nature and man have their place in all the religious scriptures which give due respect the both, and impose mutual harmony between humans and nature. All the religions of the world's explain that the man is the product of the nature and it is nature which nurtures man like a mother but the activities of the man on the earth are contaminating the nature and in turn nature is harmful for the man. All the religions hold that there must be cleanliness which is guarantee of the safe and healthy life on earth but the activities of the man on mother earth polluting it for unsafe future for the coming generation. In Hinduism: 'Ramayana' a book by Valmiki, "Vedas" compiled by Vyasa, and "Bhagavad Gita" attributed to Krishna Dvaipayana, expose the clear message of saving and conserving the nature and the environment. God is the creator of nature and He too, creates humans in this universe which gives them an equal opportunities of growing and nurturing themselves. They are interrelated due to their impacts upon each other.

If we observe closely the people of the past, they relieved in the company of the nature and they felt pleasure and comfort in the company of the animals, birds, trees and woods. They remained comfortable and felt consolation in the lap of the nature. The protection of nature and its components has been the main concern of the human beings. It is the humans who have been worshipping the nature in the very beginning of the human history either as deity or entity.

In Yajurveda, it has been said that animate and inanimate have equal importance in the universe and they have same rights of their survival. Nature and its objects in the images of deity have been worshipped in many religions of the world for getting consolation and glee. So nature should not be exploited or overused for the personal gains of the humans because it is also created by the God to keep balance in the world. It is the first obligation of the man to protect nature in order to protect the whole universe.

Development of science has given a man, an opportunity to control the whole universe over air, seas, land and in other planets of the universe. For meeting the needs of over-population, deforestation has made the wild life and woods vulnerable and the needs for the shelter has given the impetus of wiping trees from the face of earth, is a great destruction in the name of modernization. A lot of raw and basic material is being burnt and used in the modern factories to meet the growing needs of the growing population of the world, is a critical threat to the finite natural resources. So the belief that God is there in every things of the universe has shattered and we, the human are misusing or over-using the natural resources and even we, the men are using, misusing and overusing the women by considering them others and lower creation of the God for our own purposes either good or bad, further throw oil on the burning water to destruct the natural balance of the universe.

Approaches of Eco criticism

Various approaches are used to kneel with the diverse facets of environment or surroundings in literature and they are as followed, deep ecology, eco-feminism, ecosphere, ecocide, and eco-Marxism and Environment justice. These approaches study nature, culture, environment, man, woman and their connection through different perspectives. Ecofeminism, a branch of Eco criticism discusses the subjugation of women by men as nature is being used by the human beings. The domination of women by the patriarch society and domination of nature by the homo-sapiens come under this term. It is a term used to discuss the oppression and suppression of the women by the men and misuse or the overuse of the natural resources by the humans. It also discusses how the women and nature are interconnected and how they are destroyed and maltreated in male dominated society. Eco-feminists strongly consider that women and nature have strong relationship with each other by virtue of their biological factors as both are the cause of the production.

Anthropocentrism

Human based thinking is discussed in this term which is also an approach in Eco criticism. It manipulates the superiority of humans over nature and they are considered themselves the crown creature of the God. Man is considered the center of the whole universe. They have the authority to use the nature and natural resources for their own purpose and needs. Their central position makes them prominent in the universe. Humans are the sole users of the nature around them.

Androcentricism

It is a term used in Eco criticism to denote that man is superior to woman and man is more powerful and strong than woman because man is the center himself and the other sex and their members have their own center. Patriarchal society and matriarchal society are based on the superiority of male member and female member. Men, according to their biological factors are considered superior and they are there to govern the nature and the women. The life of a girl is considered low in comparison to a boy's life. In the same way the needs of the male member

is important then female member. In such societies the education and training of the boys and girls have different syllabus and aims.

Deep Ecology

This term manifests that the humans should not overuse the natural and environmental resources for themselves but considering themselves as the denizen of this environment should try their best to save the environment for their safety, environment and the coming generation. . Man is a part of the nature and should live in peace and he should never exploit the environment for their personal gains but endeavor to save it. Deep ecologists demonstrate that human beings and nature have all the rights to grow and flourish in this universe and humans have no right to spoil the beauty of nature to fulfill his daily permanent needs. This approach gives equal importance to rivers, seas, mountains, grass, trees, plants, and all the forms of nature. The present intervention of the humans with the non-humans in the industrial and digital era has worsened the situation with destruction and annihilation of both biotic and abiotic environments will be death knell to the whole environmental system.

Environmental justice

All the people have equal rights instead of their color, creed, race, caste and area. In the same way the sacred mother has same right to protect it from pollution, contamination, deforestation and over-population. Everyone has the right to live freely in the environment and the same is with the environment and environment related things. It demands secure and safe healthy life-giving surroundings and environment for everybody.

Ecocide

This term denotes the destruction of the environment in the hands of the humans. Human beings are destructing the natural environment to gain their personal ends and this causes a havoc shift in the environment as the destruction of ozone layer, contamination of the water, land and air, loss of ground water, cutting of the trees, killing of animals and construction of houses are the ruins made by the humans. Animals are regarded as lower animals and they are considered the animals without feelings of pain and trouble. They don't have soul. So we can say homo-sapiens are committing atrocities and suicides through industrialization and they exploiting global environment.

Statement of the Problem

This novel is the depiction of the story by an elderly man and a young woman whose many members of the tribe died due to illness and starvation. The females are used and restrained in their reservation. They are not cared as men are cared by them. They are considered merely the baits by the men to get their goals. It is the men who for their personal needs, use or misuse the nature and the women for the same purpose, considering them lower physically and spiritually. Women are born by default, the same way the men are born. Their struggle for survival is often undermined by the men and they use them as commodity and nothing else. So the nature and the women suffer in the hands of male as they consider them as object.

Objectives of the Study

To discover the aspects of the ecofeminism in the novel

To probe the elements of Androcentricism in the novel

To illustrate the situations which center the man and ignore the woman and nature as a whole in the novel Track.

Questions of the Study

How men exploit the women and nature in the novel?

How women and nature are interconnected or interrelated in the novel?

What possible results are expected when patriarchal society is made?

Literature Review

Novel gives the opportunities to the reader and the writer to understand the situations in a broader sense. Champagne clarifies that a novel is a tool which have been used by the Native-Americans to expose their cultural and colonial themes and it gives them a proper outlet to broad the vision of the world. Novels broaden the vision and insight of the non-Indian audience as it is a powerful tool for them.

Native-Americans have numerous traditions, traits, customs, rituals, and beliefs. They have their own ways of life leading them to save their lives and future. They believe in the company of nature which keeps them fresh all the time. They have vast variety of natural environments around them. But they are common in terms of their ecological and environmental worldviews and opinions. Bier horst pinpoints such things in Native-Americans' perspective.

Paula Gunn Allen points out that all Native-Americans, all animals, all humans, all non-humans and the nature share the same creator to whom he called the Great Mystery. According to his opinion all are considered relatives as their creator is one and the same. All the natural things either livings or non-livings have been created to share and care one another the commons things among them. They are interconnected to fulfill each other's needs and requirements.

Winona Laduke who is an activist and the member of the Mississippi Band Anishinaabegcortly writes that the teaching of the Native-Americans describes that harmony with nature is very crucial to human survival and further he says that it is the first law of ecology. He considers that all the things of the nature are like brothers, sisters, uncles, and grandfathers and grandmothers. All the rocks, sand, water, trees, plants, fish, animals, grass and other things are considered our close relations which boost and relive our relations.

Owens illustrates that it is our relation with land which displays our relationship and gives us identification. Our relation with land gives us our recognition. Earth is the key image in the Tracks and she gives an immense value to land almost all her works. Earth and environment shape the identity of the humans as our birth and death are bound to the land. He says that the

"Web of identities and relationships rises from the land itself, that element that has always been at the core of Native Americans' knowledge of who they are and where they come from" (Owens 193).

Vandana Shiva a famous influential ecofeminism scholar, manipulates that this,

"Resource-grab that is essential for growth creates a culture of rape---rape of the Earth, of local self-reliant economies, of woman."

She uses the word "mal development" which delineates that it raises men above both woman and nature. Man's patriarchal role in the society creates violation, exploitation, injustice and inequality in the environment.

Carolyn Merchant is of the opinion that following the technological and digital advancements, male dominant society began to impact the social phenomenon of the world. The whole development controlled by the male, created a gap between the male and the female further more between nature and the male. The connection was curtailed due to mechanical

move between land, water, air and animals. Women of the color are further dominated by the colored men so the women of the color are twice controlled by the White men.

There is basic conceptual bond between women and nature. As Sherry Ortner finds ubiquitous in human culture as it is the cultural desire to subjugate nature and women by the masculine because the male consider both women and nature sluggish and passive as both are considered instrumental because of their usefulness to others, men in the case of women and humans in case of the nature. Nature is exploited by the men due to its proximity with women and women are used in patriarchal society due to their perceived connection with the nature.

Methodology

This qualitative research uses textual analysis of the novel *Tracks* written by Louise Erdrich by focusing attention on the Eco-criticism theory in view and the text related to Androcentricism and Ecofeminism has been studied and analyzed to imbibe the relevant themes for the attestation of these terms. The deep and intensive reading of the novel has been made to derive the possible outcomes to meet these terms. The text presented in the article connotes and verifies the meaning and explanation of the given terms. Eco-criticism focuses on the nature and considers it the pivot of everything of the universe and considers humans as its part instead of giving him the title of super creature of Divine. This theory is significant in giving the importance to the nature contrary to other theories which center the human beings and thinking. Androcentricism and Eco-feminism are the aspects of the Eco-criticism so these aspects will be attested by quoting and analyzing the text in their perspectives.

Discussion

As it is confirm that Eco-criticism investigates the bond between man and nature. So it gives importance to human and nature on equal level and explains that both are interrelated with each other. One is responsible in saving and protecting the nature around us. This novel reveals deep Eco-critical issues with reference to Androcentricism and Ecofeminism. It draws our attention to the study of gender, social order, class distinction, superiority of males, annihilation of nature, subjugation of females and deforestation is common in this novel. The struggle of women has been discussed in detail in this novel to prove the notion that women are also a part of nature like other natural things. But it is the male members of the society who consider female members of the society lower and label them as others.

Fleur Pillager struggles against the epidemics and starvation to prove her courage and strength but she is incapacitated and incapable to give government taxes and loses her position. She is escaped by Nana push .Fleur Pillage defeats all the men in the cards in Butcher's shop. Title of the novel denotes that the author tracks down all the hardships and tribulations faced by the men and the women of North Dakota who fight ceaselessly against odd weather.

Erdrich describes the native life in a natural ways and it has close connection with the environment. The whole system of the native tribes is natural but it is subverted by the whites' way of life and we witness a destruction of natural environment and natural resources in the hands of the Whites. Fleur Pillage is herself cheated and dodged by her cousins for greed of land and is oppressed by the legal codes in the novel as well.

Fleur Pillage symbolizes with the nature as she is compared with the anima like wolf. She endeavors her best to conserve the indigenous land. She revolves the powers of nature when the Whites attack on her body and her land. So the humans particularly man considers himself superior to nature and the women.

In the novel *Tracks* the inhabitants of the Native-America live harmony with the nature as they spend their life close to nature without damaging the natural environment as they don't have devastation tools of advancement with them. The tribal people consider environment as the supernatural being and each aspect of nature is devoted to gods and goddesses. They native people show deep admiration to nature to maintain balance between nature and human beings. At the end we find inconsistency between the people who like nature and the people who like advancement so native people are people of nature and others are the people of apparatus. To honor the nature in the novel, Erdrich attributes animals with the name of the humans. Fleur is compared with wolf by Nanapush when he finds her in the cabin and she is alone and she is exceptionally strong and self-determined woman. Her whole family is perished in the pestilence after leaving her alone in the tribe. Nanapush describes her character in the following words,

"She was wild as a filthy wolf, a big bony girl whose sudden bursts of strength and snarling cries terrified the listening Pukwan" (3)

The men of Argus attack Fleur and rape her and this disconnects her from the powerful wolf and where she feels herself helpless in the hands of men who rape her and destroys her connection with nature and the humans. Whimpering in the butcher's shop shows that men consider women the object and use them without against their will. So man is superior to woman in this scene and she is used for their personal gains. The rape itself shows the violation of women rights by the patriarchal society. Women and nature procure life in the shape of new things and population so they must be cared and nurtured in spite of their molestation and annihilation in the hands of patriarchs.

Human beings treat nature as a slave and it is nature which is use for their own requirements. The animals and other thing are hunted and used for nothing but for eating and playing. They are considered merely the entity without soul. The human beings consider them that they don't have conscious to feel pain. One of the main causes of the destruction of the nature is that humans consider themselves as superior so they use natural resources for their own advantages. So the relation between nature and humans is that of powerful and powerless. Nanapush explains his ties to hunting when he says,

"I think like animals, have perfect understanding for where they hide, and in my time I have traced a deer back through time and brush and cleared field, to the place it was born" (40).

"A hunter who used my brains as my weapon" (118).

"Demand clever fingers and the ability to think exactly like your prey" (118).

The novel *Tracks* shows a connection between nature and culture. The tribal people show great respect and affection for nature in order to sustain the ecological balance. Nature is like a religion for the Native-Americans. They believe in the basics elements of nature- fire, earth, water and air and their bodies are mostly covered with leaves. But the White people destroy the trees and forest for their commercial needs so nature and environment are oppressed for their own benefits.

Environmental injustice too has inconsistent impact on women. We find in the text the subordination, subjugation, oppression of the women. Women as well as nature are being used in the world for their own needs and motifs. Women and nature are used as commodities in the commercial market. The destruction of the women and the nature by the male is the main and

an important aspect of the Eco-feminism. Fleur represents a connection between humans and nature. When she is raped by the men Argus in the story, instead of her robust body, indicates the power of man over nature or woman in a terrible way. The rape of the Fleur indicates the destruction of the nature by the men.

Pauline's character throughout the story, explains the oppression and repressions of women and the environment. She is exploited by the men when she does her work in the butcher's shop trees are considered without soul and nature is deprived of feelings of pain and trouble. Pauline describes her fear when she leaves her Native American family and moves to a new town:

"I was fifteen, alone, and so poor-looking I was invisible to most customers and to the men in the shop. Until, they needed me, I blended into the stained brown walls, a skinny big-nosed girl with staring eyes." (15-16).

Nature has strong and powerful effects on the minds and lives of the people. The land here in this novel, represents nature. The tribal people love their land very much and they sell their land for one hundred pound weight of flour. They worship nature as gods and goddesses. They think nature as god given. Moses collects different kinds of rocks, barks and herbs for treating different diseases and ailments. All the characters in the novel are collectively attached to the nature.

Anthropocentrism is human centered while Androcentricism is male centered. Male is considered superior to woman and all male consider themselves as the owner of the female, land or nature. They have authority over them, the others. The violation of nature has been linked with the violation and marginalization of women. Track illustrates the interconnected domination of nature and women in patriarchal lens.

Findings and Conclusion

The relationship between nature and humans is never-ending. Reading through the novel delineates that nature and human relation is pole apart and they influence each other with the passage of time. Both affect and are affected by the conditions prevail in the society or the universe by the actions or reactions of the human beings. The attitude of humans towards nature is often neglected to meet the needs of the humans. Nature gives peace, consolation and sooth to humans. But the attitude of humans towards nature is derogatory by considering nature soulless and painless.

Women are also a part of nature and society but in most of the societies of the world they are neglected and ignored like nature and environment. There is obliteration of natural resources, deforestation, pollution, greed for land and oppression of the women in the novel. Women are considered as commodities or objects without soul or pain. The patriarchal societies sell or use both the women and nature for their own benefits. The connection between the nature and the women has been exposed in the novel. The text reflects the patriarchal social injustice and subjugation of women. Women are related to their body, flesh, natural process, emotions and sentiments. The condition of women in a patriarchal society is equal to the situation of nature. Both are maltreated by the males. So the present study presents the relationship human beings and nature and between men and women. So both the nature and the women are marginalized and misused in the patriarchal society.

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