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An analysis of the poem “Drought” by Sitaram Adhikari

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Abstract

A poem that expresses an author’s emotional “truth” can elicit a powerful empathic reaction in its reader. The message or underlying meaning of the poem is such that it predicts the future of this world if at the name of development, global warming is continued, ultimately, we have to face such misfortune. The poet imagines such an awful condition that happens even during June-July in summer monsoon climatic zone. Thus, through this poem, the poet alerts policy makers and planners to adopt sustainable development model.

Keywords: Analysis, drought, nature, natural, poem

Introduction

A poem that expresses an author’s emotional “truth” can elicit a powerful empathic reaction in its reader. “The reader recognizes him or herself in the poem, and learns to view him or herself in a novel way” (Furman 2). The relationship between the poem and the experience of the reader can be understood through Bakhtin’s (11) concept of multi voice dness: meaning resides neither in the speaker nor the receiver, but is created through the interaction between the two. In this way, poetry is an excellent tool for exploring existential themes. “Existentialists posit that individual human emotions are by nature subjective and highly idiosyncratic” (Krill 43); each of us experiences “anxiety, dread, joy and other key emotions in our own way” (Jourard 21). Our life context and histories, and the meanings we ascribe to them, are complex and varied. They are not simply studied through research methods that pursue clear and orderly reductionist categories.

"Nature" and "natural" are notoriously elusive and ambiguous terms (Wilcher 2). Not only does their significance vary considerably from age to age, but even within a single cultural epoch they have a wide semantic range. For the purposes of this study, they will be taken in one of their simplest senses to denote the physical world as it exists apart from the products of human civilization. The phrase "natural details" thus refers to the fish, birds, and beasts; the plants and their fruits; such physical features as the sea, rivers, rocks, valleys, mountains; and such phenomena as the weather and the heavenly bodies. The aim of this dissertation will be to examine the uses that were made of images from the physical world of nature by the poet Sitaram Adhikari in “Drought”. An enquiry of this kind is both narrower and wider in scope than a study of poetic imagery in general: narrower, in that it concentrates on images derived from a limited source and wider, in that it must take into account the forces that were reshaping contemporary attitudes to the natural world itself.

Natural details, singly or combined as a landscape or "scene", may serve as the originators of "meaning", "meaning" being what emerges from the total pattern of words, syntax, concepts, and images that comprise a poem. The poet begins with a detail, or a set of details - with items which may be derived either directly from the physical environment by observation, or indirectly through a literary tradition - and allows significance to flow or be extracted from them. The natural imagery provides the initial impulse that drives the poem on to the formation of its pattern. What that pattern will be is determined by many factors quite independent of the image itself; but without the image there would be no poem at all.

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Analysis

The poem selected for this study is preoccupied with dryness and dearth. In this poem, in vivid description and beautiful language, the poet has described about drought and its impact upon nature and other living beings. This poem contains five stanzas with quatrains. The sensual images of touch, sight and the auditory are well represented in this poem.

Drought

The time has been dry, and no rain,
The whole earth has care, want and pain.
The air is hot and cruel dictator
Where should I go and seek peaceful shelter?

The fertile seed-beds of Shrawan have been damaged
All the hamlets looked as ruined as bald head
Sad are the whole tillable land or field,
A famine rose up and the pleasures killed.

Like the heat of the fire is the burning sun
Growing is the violent heat of conflagration,
The haze occurred in the gloomy appearance,
The time also has terrorist's defiance.

All the flowers are panic-stricken now,
Partridges cry in fear and care on bough,
It's pity! The black eagle cry for rain,
There's a painful story of barbet hen.

Deposer is the violent drought, no doubts,
That has emptied the grain-store of the house,
The zeal and jubilation has faded away
Misfortune laughed at people's teary way.

(Adhikari 273)

In the poem, the poet vividly describes situations created by drought upon surroundings. In the first stanza, he describes the time of dryness. There is no rain. The air is very hot. Whole earthly beings are in pain. There is nowhere safe place. In the second stanza, he imagines such an awful condition that happens even during June-July in summer monsoon climatic zone. The surrounding is compared with corrosion hill. At the same time, he shows cause and effect relationship. Because of drought, there is a famine, which ultimately sweeps away our happiness.

In the third stanza, the opening line compares the sun heat with fire, by using simile "like". The poet imagines that there is an extensive fire which destroys a great deal of land or property. He further imagines that there is an atmospheric phenomenon in which dust, smoke, and other dry particulates obscure the clarity of the sky. He compares the time with a terrorist's challenge to meet in combat.

In the fourth stanza, we can find the continuation of description of environment created by drought. The flowers are in panic condition. In the second line the poet has symbolically fascinated partridge. "Partridge is a symbol of Satan who wishes to steal all souls from God just as the partridge steals eggs from other nests" (Alchin 1). How a partridge is said to steal all souls from God, similarly, the drought steals our happiness. In the third line, the poet has carried out another symbolic bird, the black eagle (*Chatak*). "In Hindu mythology this bird is unable or unwilling to drink water found on earth and instead chooses to drink only

fresh rain water as it falls from the sky. Legend has it that this bird never drinks water off the ground. And that however thirsty it may be, it supposedly drinks only rain water as it falls from the heavens. For this reason it has come to symbolize a true spiritual aspirant." (Arunachal Grace 1). We can imagine the pitiable time even the *Chatak* is crying for water. The last line of the fourth stanza brings the state of mind when there is distress. The barbet song symbolizes anguish condition of human.

The final stanza explores miserable condition of human being brought by the drought. Because of drought, we are deprived of food and faith. There is no more happiness. From all aspects, there is only misfortune.

Conclusion

The message or underlying meaning of the poem is such that it predicts the future of this world if at the name of development, global warming is continued, ultimately, we have to face such misfortune. The poet imagines such an awful condition that happens even during June-July in summer monsoon climatic zone. Thus, through this poem, the poet alerts policy makers and planners to adopt sustainable development model. Finally, usages of the literary term and simplicity of language has made the poem sublime.

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