

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE POEMS BHAI VIR SINGH AND SHIV KUMAR BATALAVI IN THE LIGHT OF ECOCRITICAL THEORY

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Abstract:

In literary sphere, approach of Ecocriticism focuses on environmental issues and dominance of man over non-human living and non-living objects. Rapid degradation of environment is an important concern facing all disciplines of knowledge and man centeredness known as anthropocentrism is believed to be one of the major causes behind this. The present study is an attempt to focus on Bhai Vir Singh's selected poetry in the theoretical framework of ecocriticism in order to shed light on the poet's vigilant views about the relationship of human life and nature.

Keywords: Anthropocentrism, Degradation, Environmental, Implementation, Objective correlative.

Bhai Vir Singh and Shiv Kumar Batalvi are modern Punjabi poets whose contribution to the development of Punjabi poetry, is immense. Both of these poets are the winners of Sahitya Academy Awards, Bhai Vir Singh is also the winner of . award. Bhai Vir Singh required symbols and motives from the nature so Shiv Kumar Batalvi. The phrase "literature and environment" came into prominence among literary scholars in the United States and abroad in the early and mid-1990s when the

Scholarly organization called "The Association for the Study of Literature and Environment" (acronym ASLE) and the journal ISLE (Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment) were launched. Although the phrase "Literature and Environment" is still sometimes used, many critics prefer the more inclusive idea of approaching literature in a way that explore the relationship between literary expression and all environments rather than focusing more narrowly on the interesting and concern for "the environment" (the world beyond human affairs) in literary expression. The word "environment" literally means "surroundings" as in the German equivalent Umwelt (or "around-world") (Slovic 1).

Although writers throughout the world have always been interested in interactions between humans and the landscape, flora and fauna, literary scholars and others specialists in the arts and humanities (the visual and performing arts, history, philosophy, and related disciplines) have traditionally concentrated their studies on human expression and human experience, seldom considering the ramifications of human behaviour for the larger planet and the impact of nature on human experience.

All developments of science, technology and commerce in the name of progress are mainly anthropocentric (human created) and definitely neglect the claim so for natural environment.

Such a balanced view of progress in due course of time compelled man to make his progress bio-centric (earth created) so that the natural environment may be protected and its balance with human life may be maintained. Eco-criticism aligns itself with ecological activism and social theory with the assumption that the rhetoric of cultural texts reflects and informs material practices towards the environment, while seeking to increase awareness about it and linking itself and literary texts with other ecological sciences and approaches. (Nayar 291).

Simply defined, eco-criticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment (Glotfelty). Just as feminist criticism examines language and literature from a gender-conscious perspective, and Marxist criticism brings an awareness of modes of production and economic class to its reading of text, eco-criticism takes an earth-centered approach to literary studies. Eco-criticism investigates the inter-connection between nature and culture, specifically the cultural artefacts language and literature.

Most eco-critical works share a common motivation: the troubling awareness that we have reached the age of environmental limits, at a time when the consequences of human actions are damaging the planet's basic life support systems (Glotfelty). Compelled by the idea of saving the environment from total chaos, a number of creative writers of last two decades, made it a point to deal with nature as an important entity in their literary text. When these texts are studied from an eco-critical perspective, the reader finds the inner-relatedness of all factors within the eco-system like social, political and phenomenon of natural world. Even the physical setting in the literary text plays an important role in the total understanding of its meaning.

Many discussions demonstrate mankind's bond with the Earth, a fragile, beautiful and ecological wholeness, and ecological consciousness which plays a central role in the comprehension of ramifications of aesthetics, philosophy and ethics. In addition, both Bhai Vir Singh and Shiv Kumar Batalvi's attitudes to nature show how he regards nature as central to the creative process and physical and psychological therapy to human beings.

Metaphysical conceit is a frequent device in Bhai Vir Singh's poetry. The motif of withdrawal from the world also recurs frequently in his poetry. He also grieves at the prevalence of unhappiness in the world and his inability to lessen it. His poetry is largely modern in form. In spirit, it is oriental in that it lays stresses on otherworldliness. The poetry of Shiv Kumar Batalvi which sought toward ideological meaning to birth, occupation, and death. On account of this, Batalvi's poetry obliterated the distance between the poet, interlocutor, and the listener. From this obliteration flowed pleasure that found all social values as constraints, but did little to evaluate them. It was this job of evaluation that modernist poetry took upon itself to perform, and that too creditably indeed. Bhai Vir Singh is essentially a great exponent of nature. He is alive to its feast of colours and forms. He catches its contours, its light and shade like a painter.

The main feature of his poetry is that he used such vocabulary which has never been touched upon before in Punjabi poetry. He derived his powerful imagery from the folk culture and rustic life of Punjab. His symbolism, diction and the novel usage of myth enriched Punjabi literature in a unique way. Nature is present everywhere in his poetry, and apart from idealizing nature, he talks about human existence.

Another point to be discussed in the comparative studies of these poets is that Shiv Kumar Batalvi being a modern poet talks also about the feminist aspects; the condition of women;

the way how he waits for her lover, husband or characteristics of beloved. Shiv Kumar Batalvi always personifies nature; he gives more importance to human nature than to natural objects. The anthropomorphism concept of ecocriticism is quite visible in the poetry of Shiv. Shiv Kumar was a romantic poet, who gained prominence at the crucial juncture when the emerging era of modernity was decisively and permanently replacing the traditional way of writing Punjabi poetry, he poured his sadness into his creative process. Below the discussion of both poets poems in the light of ecocritical theory.

Anthropomorphism is attribution of human form or other characteristics to anything other than a human being. Anthropocentric nature of human language, projecting as it does a world usually understood according to our own scale, dimensions, interests and desires. To describe a specific representation as anthropomorphism necessarily makes certain assumptions about what human nature itself is in first place. The following poems “Jee Aiyan Nun” (“A Hearty Welcome”), “Yaad” (“Remembrance”) show anthropocentrism in a practical way.

Both Shiv and Bhai Vir Singh have given a vivid description of nature very artistically and wonderfully. In the following poem entitled “Jee Aiyan Nun” (“A Hearty Welcome”) Bhai Vir Singh addresses sun and laments about sun’s non arrival. Bhai Vir Singh welcomes the sun whole hearty and receives it with full of pleasures. Arrival of the sun gives him lot of happiness and joy and fills him with optimism.

You have been behind clouds,
For so many days handsome sun!
I have been waiting in pain,
To see your radiance again!
You have appeared on your own this morning, Welcome, most hearty welcome!
Seeing you brings me tremendous joy,
Your lustre fill our earth and skies. (“Jee Aiyan Nun” 54)

Rising sun symbolises birth, life, light and optimism. Bhai Vir Singh also wants to attain these things from the sun. It seems he talks to the sun as he is talking to the person. An anthropomorphism of ecocriticism, implies implications of the human emotions and feelings on non-human objects. Bhai Vir Singh in this poem also implies the human feelings to the sun. That is why its absence hurts him a lot. Bhai Vir Singh also considers all human and non-human equal beings, he is treating sun as living human beings, who have an equal right to live and enjoy their lives. Bhai Vir Singh wants to merge in the beautiful world of nature with the arrival of sun. He wants to enjoy each and every aspect of nature.

In this stanza of poem “Yaad” (“Remembrance”) Shiv Kumar Batalvi is trying to equate the characteristics of nature with himself, he always feels happy whenever he draws such comparisons.

Today’s evening of pigeon’s colour
Sees to me just like me
And annoyed like me (“Yaad” 90)

Shiv in this poem compares the evening with himself and pigeon. Shiv Kumar takes nature at the centre of his poems. He treats nature as his own family member with whom he can talk and share his joys and sorrows and nature on its part responds to his own wishes/desires. He uses nature as a background to serve his concept of the human relationship to this planet upon which human race is destined to live out its days. The association of human and non-human world is

effectively shown by him. As Christopher says in that like human language there is also the language of birds, the wind, earth worms, wolves and waterfalls (The Ecocriticism 15).

Shiv also considers all human and non-human are equal beings, he is treating evening as a living being, and he feels one with entire natural world. As it is seen in anthropomorphism as a part of ecocriticism, in which the human feelings are applied to non-human objects. Shiv in this poem also applies human feelings to the evening who has similar characteristics as that of his beloved. Shiv also wants to convey the emotions of evening as well as of his beloved. He stresses on the same aspect here.

In the above discussed poems of Bhai Vir Singh and Shiv Kumar Batalvi, anthropomorphism is being employed in a very beautiful way. But Bhai Vir Singh uses anthropomorphism in the context of clouds and sun of the earth, which travels from one place to another. If these are not here, then they will be at another place. And Shiv Kumar makes use of this concept in reference to pigeon, which is very small as compared to both sun and clouds. It has wings and its flight is not so far as that of sun and clouds. Shiv always takes those natural objects which he considers, are in his control and surrounds him, Bhai Vir Singh uses to take the elements of earth and their control is not in our control, these elements exist above the universe. Shiv takes ordinary things and the circle of Bhai Vir Singh's references is very wide.

Ecophilosophy sees humanity as one with nature, as an integral part of the process of evolution which carries the universe onward from inanimate matter to life, to consciousness, and ultimately to divine. It is seen in "Hosh Masti" (Sense and Stupor), "Risham Rupali" (I Am the Ray of First Star).

Although he has to face several deceives at the hands of his beloveds. But he always writes poems in the appreciations of his beloved. In the present poem also he is trying to compare his beloved with the ray in this poem "Risham Rupali" ("I Am the Ray of First Star"):

I am the ray of first star

I am the oleaginous threshold of your door we auspicious in to your fire

We are the first to take bath into your fire till we are sparking into the fire
even today we have the fragrance of your scintillating I am the ray of First star

Dear, the fragrance of flower may die

But the fragrance of love never dies dear I am the fire of yours

But I never merge into you

My shame is residing with the fire but it never speaks although the fire is in our custody
today it becomes ember of someone else I am the ray of

First star ("Risham Rupali" 276)

The present poem is presented from a girl's point of view, who tells that she is the beautiful ray of beam of the first star. In the second line, she asserts she is the oiled bone of his lover's house. She is very much devoted to his lover, that is why she starts equating herself firstly with the ray of beam and then with his bone. The first thing to be noted in this poem is that the female initially keeps herself at the top and then with the bone of his lover's house. She assumes a very place to keep her lover happy.

Ecophilosophy is quite visible in this poem, it is union of nature and philosophy. Shiv in the guise of his beloved and ray, tries to establish a beautiful relationship between himself and the

philosophy of nature. His beloved feels herself one with the nature. The female wants to keep herself away from the world. The present scenario presents a conflict between soul and body. Bhai Vir Singh in this poem entitled "Hosh Masti" ("Sense and Stupor") wants to merge in the company of nature after his death.

Around my grave, Nature has planted a lovely garden; Many -visitors strollin, But walk away from my grave. O'you people don't you see:

It is not a corpse; it is me!

Flowers, fruits, leaves sweet peas and Here they are—all me! ("Hosh Masti" 23)

Bhai Vir Singh defines his feelings after his death in which he wants to reside in the company of nature as he is living in his life time. He begins his poem by stating that many visitors come to his grave and walk away from it. Because they consider him dead and get sacred from his grave. Bhai Vir Singh laments that he is same as he is alive. Nature has planted numerous beautiful flowers around his grave. He ends his poem on that the note that people are sacred from his grave, but nature gives him very precious gifts by planting very beautiful flowers and fruits around his grave.

Bhai Vir Singh also wants to throw light on the selfish attitude of society which changes instantly not only towards dead people but also towards the alive ones. But it is nature which continuously live with us. He presents a very new kind of relationship which exists among nature and human beings and remains always the same in all seasons. Ecophilosophy as discussed under ecocriticism sees humanity one with nature, as an integral part of the process of evolution which carries universe onwards from matter to consciousness and at the end to divine and in this poem. Bhai Vir Singh also doing the same and throws light on the fact that each and everything comes and merges into the same universe, we will take nothing with us in the end, we come empty handed and goes in the same way.

The flora and fauna around her grave is the princess herself like T.S. Eliot in the Four Quartets, Bhai Vir Singh makes us conscious of the cosmic cycle in space and time that we perpetually move through. In this short lyrical poem, he succeeds in transforming the mood from lamentation to celebration, the locale from grave to birth, the time from past to present, but the reality is simultaneously human and natural.

As discussed earlier whenever Shiv has to take the natural objects from the nature, he also makes use of ordinary things, in the above discussed poem he gives the characteristics of being a ray to his beloved. Ecophilosophy is being used in both of the poems. In the poem of Shiv, this has been used in versely as in the poem of Bhai Vir Singh. In Shiv's poem this concept is used in the context of his beloved, but in the poem of Bhai Vir Singh it makes a personal reference because he wants to merge into the nature even after his death.

In environmental unconscious a person realizes embeddedness in nature as a social being as in the following poems "Titlayian" ("Butterflies"), "Turdi Sanjh Saver" ("Evening and Morning Are on the Go" its presence has been felt.

In this poem Shiv Kumar Batalavi is trying to catch the butterflies. He presents a very beautiful picture of catching a butterflies in this poem "Titlayian" ("Butterflies").

I catch butterflies, I catch butterflies. From the beautiful
Flower-scented garden Of life, I catch
Golden-colored, blue, Shimmering and yellow ones!

I think that if catch them all
From the entire forest.
I will colour their butterfly wings
To their shoulder.
But whenever I try to catch them, My heart begins to tremble.
I will be able to catch butterflies. (“Titlayian”34)

Shiv begins his poems by saying that he catches butterflies from the beautiful flowered garden of golden, blues him mering and of yellow colour. And he fibs their butterfly wings to their shoulders. Then he implies that whenever he tries to catch butterflies, his heart begins to tremble like a branch of henna which shivers in the breeze. And then the butterfly has taken flight. Then Shiv expresses the scared side of his heart. Till now he tries to express his joy which he finds in catching the butterflies. Their perfume sodden fragrance spreading through each heartbeat. Then a delicate queenly butterfly comes by his side fluttering by and gets delighted to see the flowers of sin. The cold winter of griefs corched the flowers of poet's happiness. The green vine of hope has shed its healthy leaves. There the poet becomes pessimistic. After seeing this horrible darkness, the butterflies slipped back to valley and the red birds that had flown far to seek their desires ,to fulfil their own dreams.

Towards the end of poem, the poet gives a message by saying that it is the evening of life and lotus hearts lie asleep. The dew drops of poet's life have spilled and some of these drops have been sipped by some butterflies. But the poet ends the poem with an optimistic note that the next day will surely dawn and once again the sun will not regarding darkness. And then he says milky lotus of the evening will bloom upon this earth again and then he again will be able to catch butterflies.

Happiness, sorrows are all the put of human life and traits of human beings. Whenever they are happy, they feel the entire nature accompanies themselves in the moments of their happiness. They feel the entire nature is singing, dancing and enjoying the moments of their happiness. But whenever they are sad their thinking charges suddenly and the same nature which is enjoying their happiness, seems blurred and dark to them. This is a human trait. There Batalvi does the same, when he is happy he is able to see the colourful butterflies and birds, but when sadness comes to him, the scene charges from optimism to pessimism suddenly and he beings to see flowers of sin and black sun in his dreams.

Environmental unconscious is fully visible in this poem, where a person realises embeddedness in nature as a social being. When the poet is happy he is able to enjoy the nature with beautiful creatures of nature like birds and butterflies but when he is sad, all the beautiful things turned into horrible things like flowers of sin and broken sun. And the poet also thinks that he is foolish who beigns to feel that he is able to catch a beautiful butterfly. The poet feels himself alienated in the selfish materialistic society and he feels comfort by uttering his poems on nature. Butterflies are symbols of transfer motion through the process of metamorphoses. They are also symbolic of faith. There poet thinks occasionally that he is able to catch a beautiful butterfly, means he feels himself to be transformed but then suddenly all of his hopes are scattered and symbolically the butterfly flies. But he thinks positively that his sorrows will come to an end some day.

It also attempts to develop and understand the ways of expanding the emotional connection between individuals and natural world. Batalvi here builds an internal relationship between himself and natural creatures. When he catches a butterfly, it seems to him that his sorrowful days come to an end, but when that beautiful butterfly flies away from him, he again comes into his gloomy world.

Bhai Vir Singh is entirely a poet of nature. He gives human feelings and emotions to day and night. He talks about their playing nature, singing and dancing and embracing as human beings do. As we have discussed earlier anthropomorphism, Bhai Vir Singh is doing the same by applying such emotions to the day and night in this poem "Turdi Sanjh Saver" ("Evening and Morning Are on the Go").

Swept by the crisp breeze Night and day flow Playing their symphony
They sing their Lover's song With their unsung melody
They choreograph their Lover's dance- Reaching up to the trees
Embracing again and again! Never does it stop
Never does it slow Constant is its flow
Evening and morning are on the go ("Turdi Sanjh Saver" 78)

Environmental unconsciousness is quite visible in this poem. The entire atmosphere, including inanimate elements, rocks and minerals along with animate plants and animals, is assigned an intrinsic value. Everything is connected to everything else. The entire nature qualifies each part; conversely, a change in one of the parts will change the other parts and the whole. Ecologically, this has been illustrated by the idea that no part of ecosystem can be removed without changing the dynamics of the cycle. If there occurs too many changes then the ecosystem will be collapsed.

There is a strong sense of respect for nature in its right as well as for pragmatic reasons. Here in this poem Bhai Vir Singh's life is totally in harmony with the nature and ecocide also stresses on the similar value. Bhai Vir Singh and Shiv Kumar Batalvi make use of natural objects into their poem, from the nature they draw their inspirations. In both of the poems of Bhai Vir Singh and Shiv the concept namely environmental unconsciousness makes its entry in a very beautiful way, but entirely in a different manner. Bhai Vir Singh takes those natural objects which do not have spirit and souls like the beings like humans or birds, and animals. But the context of Shiv is always focused upon the beings with spirits which always exists into the surroundings of human beings.

Bhai Vir Singh is influenced by nature to that extent that he cannot be able to imagine his life without the existence of nature. Whenever he finds himself gloomy, he takes solace into the lap of nature. Almost each and every poem of Bhai Vir Singh is full of natural elements and imagery. In the poet's intuition, nature and humanity are inextricably woven together in the web of life. He does not think about nature in its functional role of creativity or destruction. Bhai Vir Singh's imagination always finds the topics of his poetry from the beautiful aspects of nature. In majority of his poems, his readers find themselves in the company of nature. Nature always plays an essential part in Punjabi life. In the eyes of Bhai Vir Singh, the miracles of the world and the beauties of nature constitute an inexhaustible paragon and he owns the ability of giving the appeal of innovation to things of every-day life and has the power of exciting the sympathy of the reader by a faithful adherence to the truth of nature. Shiv Kumar was a

naturalist poet wrote poetry considering himself as a part of nature. He wants to live and die in the lap of nature. He is quite influenced by the environmental elements and constants human beings and nature. It develops his relationship with nature, landscape, history and natural surroundings. Shiv is able to see nature as a human being and has an ability to interact with nature. Shiv Kumar takes nature at the center of his poems. He treats nature as his own family member with whom he can talk and share his joys and sorrows and nature on its part responds to his own wishes/desires. He uses nature as a background to serve his concept of the human relationship to this planet upon which human race is destined to live out its days. The recurrent use of the ecological elements like earth, water, air, tree, animal in his poetry undoubtably suggests that he was truly an ecocritical poet and who enjoyed to live in the company of nature. Although both of these poets are employing nature into their poems, but their context is different. Bhai Vir Singh's poetry is usually concentrated on Sikhism and he also shows Nature inconnection with divine, but Shiv Kumar does not use nature in this way. Bhai Vir Singh takes scenes from the landscapes which he usually visited like Kashmir. But Shiv Kumar Batalvi takes natural symbols from ordinary life. Bhai Vir Singh uses nature in a very optimistic way and Shiv Kumar Batalvi usually writes poems in a pessimistic way.

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