

Climate Change And Its Repercussions In Forty Signs Of Rain And Fifty Degrees Below

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Abstract

Ecocriticism is an inquiry that helps to bridge the gap between human and the environment. The anthropocentric world created by humans has destroyed the peaceful nature and it is time for humans to face its consequences. The novel *Forty Signs of Rain and Fifty Degrees Below* gives an idea of climate change and its impact on the lives of innocent people because of politics and economy. The novels clearly picture the need for to tackle the climate change, sea level rise and global warming. Kim Stanley Robinson has portrayed the need for the people to understand the importance of ecocriticism and leaving the anthropocentric attitude for a better future.

Key Words: Ecocriticism, anthropocentrism, nature, climate change, ecocriticism.

Introduction

The term ecocriticism is first used by William Rueckert in his essay *Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism* in

the book *The Ecocriticism Reader* published in 1978. Slowly the importance of nature is understood by the critics and they started to write about preserving nature for the future generations. Ecocriticism shows a tremendous growth in the United States. Race, class and gender are the topics discussed in the late twentieth century, but no one has an idea of earth's life system is under stress. It takes an earth centered approach. It is the study of relationship between literature and the physical environment.

Ecocriticism enlarges the idea of the world to include all of ecosphere. Barry Commoner's first law of ecology, everything is connected to everything else. Ecocritics prefer eco- over enviro- because it deals with the human culture and the physical world.

Enviro- is anthropocentric and dualistic, implying that we humans are at the center, surrounded by everything that is not us, the environment. Eco- in contrast, implies interdependent communities, integrated systems, and strong connections among constituent parts. (20)

In newspapers, there are news of oil spillage, toxic waste contamination, acid rain, famines, droughts, floods and hurricanes. In 1989, Time magazine's person of the year award went to The Endangered Earth. The growth of ecocriticism can be seen through the organization like Association for the Study of Literature and Environment. Patrick Murphy starts a journal *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment* to create a place for environmental considerations. Ecocriticism shows that humans are affecting the environment and affected by it. This shows the difference between human and the non-human. William Rueckert says:

we are in an environmental crisis because the means by which we use the ecosphere to produce wealth are destructive of the ecosystem itself. The present system of production is self-destructive. The present course of human civilization is suicidal. In our unwitting march towards ecological suicide we have run out of options. Human beings have broken out of the circle of life, driven not by biological need, but by social organization which they have devised to conquer nature. (116)

Ecocritics look for non-industrial culture by examining the likelihood of an alliance between these cultures and the larger environmental movement. Industrial development is one of the most destructive types of cultural development.

Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony* and Linda Hogan's *Solar Storms* tell about the ecological values of Native American way of life and they are fixed against those of white industrial capitalism. The environmental justice movement can be used to tell about the struggles of the poor society as they have to face the challenges of toxic waste, contaminated air, food and water and they lose their land and life. When evaluating texts and ideas, ecocritics will incorporate issues of class, race, gender, and colonialism. This will challenge environmentalist ideologies that seem to be solely focused on protecting the natural world while ignoring the aspirations of the poor.

Kim Stanley Robinson (23 March 1952) is an American science fiction writer. Ecology, political, economy and cultural is the common themes in his novels. He has won awards as the Hugo Award for Best Novel, the Nebula Award for Best Novel and the World Fantasy Award. The *Science in the Capital* trilogy focuses on the anthropocene attitude of humans that lead to climate change, sea level rise and global warming. In the trilogy, the first novel *Forty Signs of Rain* published in 2004 focuses on the effect of global warming. The second novel *Fifty Degrees Below* published in 2005 follows the first novel and tells about the devastating flood and the preventive measures taken. The third novel *Sixty Days and Counting* published in 2007 explores the measures to be taken to tackle the climate change for the future.

Forty Signs of Rain opens in summer with the protagonist Charlie Quilber who is fed up with the growing climate change politics. He wants to create a peaceful environment for his children without any global warming politics. He is associated with the legislative assembly so he knows about the inner politics which affects the life of people in many ways. Anna and her associate Frank Vanderwal at the National Science Foundation are also disturbed with the delay in outlook of the association in considering serious environmental issue. Anna meets Drepung and Rudra Cakrin in Khembalung embassy at the NSF and is curious of the sea level rise in Khembalung, a small nation near the Bay of Bengal. "Global warming? Anna ventured. He nodded, swallowed. Our Dutch friends suggested that we establish an embassy here, to join their campaign to influence American policy in these matters." (FSR 66).

Climatologists predict that nature take revenge with recurrent storms called *Hypernino* in the novel. "The

Hypernino severe drought in India and Peru, perpetual lightning fires in Malaysia; then on the daily scale, a typhoon destroying most of Mindanao, a snap freeze killing crops and breaking pipes all over Texas, and so on. Something every day” (FSR 75). It creates havoc as Californian sandstone precipices into Pacific Ocean, whereas, a huge storm in the Atlantic led to deluge Washington.

All the characters volunteer themselves to aid those who have been severely harmed by storms and flood. Khembalis assists the zoo workers in safe guarding animals from rising floods by opening the cages and even making arrangements for two tigers to be placed in the cellar of Quilber’s home.

The Khembali legation urged the National Park staffers to evacuate the zoo as quickly as possible. The time and vehicles necessary for a proper evacuation were completely lacking, of course, as the superintendent quickly pointed out, but the Khembalis replied that by evacuation they meant opening all the cages and letting the animals escape. The zookeepers were skeptical, but the Khembalis turned out to be experts in flood response, well-acquainted with the routines required in such situations. (FSR 380)

Leo Mulhouse joins an army of volunteers working to shore up the cliffs, while Frank joins others in spreading sandbags outside in the rain.

Anna considers the future of her kids terrifies her, but she speculates and resolves to find a solution for the current predicament. All the characters react fearfully and pragmatically to prevent the worst-case climatic scenarios from occurring. The characters in the novel understand that even more tragic disasters would be unavoidable if the people and the government do not reject methods of ruining nature. In the end of the novel the government and groups like NSF start looking for ways to combat global warming and floodwater recedes.

In Fifty Degrees Below, the temperature drops fifty degrees below and zero degree due to breakdown of Artic ice and the plot focuses on international effort to restart the stalled Gulf Stream. This book also account the trip of Frank, Charlie and Anna to the Tibetan island Khembalung but unfortunately, the island is hit by weird weather disaster.

And now we have been informed that the monsoon or something else has caused the breaking of ice dams in the drainage of the Brahmaputra. He looked at Charlie: These big glacial lakes are a result of global warming. The Himalayan glaciers are melting fast, and now lots of ice dams that create lakes behind them are giving way under these monsoon rains, adding greatly to the run-off. (FDB 180)

Global environmental issue includes the loss of habitat and an increase in atmospheric carbon by 100 parts per million leads to the extinction of species and food shortages. It may be separated into the atmosphere, ocean, and land. "Now up to 440 parts per million, from 280 before the industrial revolution. Clearly, we need to slow down how much CO₂ we're putting into the atmosphere, despite the industrialization of China, India and many other places" (FDB 127). Topsoil loss, desertification, and floods are issues faced on land. Sea levels are rising in the seas slowly due to global warming. The probability of the Antarctic ice sheet breaking apart is quite challenging. The thermohaline circulation is another factor with the North Atlantic being a specific stall in the global stream. Moreover, there is a decline in coral reefs and fisheries and tend to underestimate the harm that the water may cause. Carbon dioxide builds up in the atmosphere but other powerful greenhouse gas like methane also play a significant role.

The goals and profits of carbon-based capitalism are short-termed and offer an image of the potential environmental restoration by recalibrating present conceptions of economics and growth. Although, the United States administration refuses to recognize the climate crisis but Robinson tries to re-orient society towards a sort of utopianism on earth by instilling values of environmental and social justice for the future. In the end, the novel not just gives warning about the future and urges individuals to work towards its creation. The novel tries to explore the possibility of symbiotic relationship between politics and science by following the actions of political advisors, policy-makers and scientists.

The novel tells about the need for environmental conservation and tries to tackle the climate change and sea level rise. It also tells about the need for safeguarding the environment from political people and economists. The climate change and sea level rise makes the people understand the need to overcome the global warming in the future. The character in the novel takes necessary steps to solve the

human made disasters. The human's anthropocentric attitude towards nature made them suffer and which in turn made them realise their mistakes. So make the world a better place for the future generations and let the human be ecocentric.

Climate change happens because of the imbalance in the ecosystem. It can be seen clearly in the novels *Forty Signs of Rain* and *Fifty Degrees Below*. These novels give a clear insight of the environmental damage that is caused by humans. Humans are created to protect the balance in the nature but they destroy nature for their economic development. If this prevails, nature will destroy humans without mercy. Protect nature from the climate change and live an eco-friendly life.

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