

A dawn of destruction reflected in the poetry of Vihang A.Naik

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Abstract

In Vihang A.Naik's poetry one can observe the mention of natural disasters such as earthquakes, drought, floods occurring all over the world, devastating people's lives and the destruction of the environment in which they live in. 'Destruction' naturally can be termed as a concept of damage to an object, system, being or idea and it in general sense means the end of the world that threatens to destroy or cripple human civilization. It originates from a Latin word 'Destructio' which means 'the process of taking apart something that was built'. In theology, it is concerned with what is believed to be the ultimate destiny of humanity, with the end of human civilization. Destruction is the act or process of damaging something so badly that it no longer exists or cannot be repaired. Vihang A.Naik is a post-modernist poet and his poetry reflects the growing industrialization and unjustified exploitation of natural resources in modern life. His four collection of poetry includes 'Poetry Manifesto: new and selected poems' (2010), 'Making a Poem' (2004), 'City Times and other poems' (1993). His Gujarati collections of poems are entitled as 'Jeevangeet' published in the year 2001. Through his poems, he speaks about the natural consciousness of human beings to preserve natural resources because of their unfair treatment of nature that have brought our ecosystem to a verge of non-reversibility and imbalance. Hence, this paper mainly deals with the theme of destruction used in his poetry that highlights how nature, virtue, truth, morality, innocence is being destroyed in today's modern life. The growing imbalance in nature had led to a threat and thus they set a form of natural hazards and mainly the human activity induced hazard like pollution and global warming. We find enough examples of destructive natural hazards being pointed by the poet. Although natural disasters are caused by nature and there is nothing that we can do in order to prevent them happening, yet there are many different natural causes that lead to natural disasters and being aware of them enables us to better prepare ourselves when such disasters arrive.

Keywords: Environment, Eco-criticism, Disaster, Innocence, Morality, War, Life.

Introduction

Vihang A.Naik's poems deal with the environmental issues and concerns and in this way he deals or examines the various ways in which literature treats the subject of nature by providing possible solution for the connection of contemporary environmental situation. Actually, the poet had keenly studied the relationship between literature and the physical environment with a deep insight in nature or natural things depending upon the human interaction with nature. He had very well presented the global picture of discrimination and divided politics in his poetry. He renounces the materialistic pursuit of life in order to devote life wholly to poetry for an expression of aesthetic vision of life. This style that he employs in poetry reveals his straightforward personality and his language is free from any artificiality and literary decorativeness. The language that he had employed expresses his ideas about nature and environment in simple language so that the reader can read and understand. He is gifted with a rare quality of transforming a complete idea into a simple one and presenting it to the reader in a very engrossing manner. One of the reasons for the simplicity of his language is his use of simple ordinary words to which ordinary readers are known. His mastery lies in the use of simple, lucid language which specially arouses the reader's interest. His poetry is graceful and simple. It is his charm that attracts the attention and he expresses his thoughts clearly and effectively in his own style. He writes his poems in a straightway, in a technique that arrests the reader's attention to it. A literary critic from India, L. L. Yogi opines: "The poet has something up his sleeves to say

beyond the appearances. He does not describe what things are, but what they are stirring to be, in his consequences. He has proved his credentials through 'The City and Other Poems, and is a poet of the future' (L. L. Yogi, Literary Critic, Indian Book Chronicle, India, 2015). Man is an integral part of the environment yet he is considered to be the arch enemy of it and for centuries man has been thriving its generosity by destroying the natural beauty in order to build infrastructural buildings that is very much required in modern city life as in his poem 'The Banyan City', he talks about trees being replaced by buildings stating:

"The old banyan
Is no more. You can no longer click
That tree at the crossroad" (p.14)

Human beings are very fortunate to be living in this beautiful environment. We toil over the land and in return we receive the provision of which we live. Even though, we get all that we need from this beautiful land, we still for some reason feel like we need to alter it. And in doing so we end up ruining or destroying the land that we thrive on. We reshape the world to fit our individual needs. But the earth does not work in that way. Everything in this nature has a purpose and if they are used or changed then there can be both devastating and dramatic effects.

In the quest to make life very simple and more luxurious, people have turned a blind eye to the damage caused to the environment and nature. People's greed to get the most out of everything has made them contemptuously neglect the environment and nature although they know that their very

existence depends on it. Nature and the environment has always been the victim for this which is languishing and diminishing due to people's apathetic nature. This is what Vihang A. Naik had reflected in his poems examining the human perception of destroying the nature that had changed throughout history representing the current environmental issues accurately. Through his poetry, one can understand that it is the time to undo the damage done to the surroundings. It can be done in a way by nations coming together for protecting the environment. We find the poet engaging himself in his poetry about the application of ecology and ecological concepts to the study of literature which is known as eco-criticism. He had very aptly used it and applied to understand the unfolding environmental crisis. Eco-criticism is the youngest of the revisionist movements that have swept the humanities over the past few decades. The poet's common ground on which all strands of eco-criticism prevail is the assumption of ideas that structures the desire of governing the interaction between human and their natural environment. They are of central importance according to the poet and a means to get a handle over the ecological predicament. The poet in his poems seek to engage environmental history, philosophy, sociology and science studies that deals with the ecology of the natural environment by considering the many relations between literature and the natural world. Dr. Kalyani Dixit comments: "Poetry Manifesto is indubitably a gem in the treasure box of contemporary Indian English poetry. Since the experimental strain, philosophical expressions and emotional intensity displayed by Vihang A. Naik is exceptional. Reading of this collection instills the sense of satisfaction and wondrous pleasure in the hearts of the readers" (Dixit, Dr. Kalyani, Colossal Range Of Experiences And Philosophical Vision Of Vihang A. Naik In Poetry Manifesto New And Selected Poems, Research Scholar 1.4 2013: 1-4).

In the poet's view we lack imagination where we analyze nature and this is where his poetic endurance and craftsmanship lies by romanticizing nature by giving a true picture of Indian nature. It tells us about the human condition by analyzing how the actual and real scientific facts of nature influence our lives and literature. He mainly incorporates the strict study of natural objects into literary criticism that helps to understand how nature might be its own force in literature and the one that operates the human principles and motivation by granting a new insight into people. The poet had spent time upon thinking the ways to reduce a people's negative impact on the environment and nature through his poetry. Techno culture is arising in today's modern world by the use of computer networks as in his poem 'New Websight' he exclaims:

"Your vision
 Makes an inductive
 Leap
 The fear grips
 An e-age as the century
 Turns" (p.12)

He brings out the perfect techno polis life where modern people are engrossed in communication, entertainment, work and business. In his poem 'Gujarat' he simply states about the devastating earthquake that took place in Gujarat on 26th January, 2001. An earthquake is a vehement shake of the earth from natural causes and is a phenomenon of strong vibrations occurring on the ground. It is a consequence to release of large amount of energy with a short period of time that becomes a

sort of disturbance in the earth's crust or in the upper part of mantle and this comes as a great damage by destruction of buildings and nature resulting to the huge loss of life and property. This mass destruction to human life caused due to the Gujarat Earthquake has grieved the poet's heart and soul to a great extent. He gives a vivid and a clear picture of the earthquake through the lines stating:

"On Gujarat's face of gold
 Now
 Only horrific cracks
 And a sense of great
 Loss" (p.20).

One can find the poet giving a picture of drought that destroys the lives of humans and animals and the natural environment. Drought is a period of below average precipitation in a region resulting in prolonged shortages of water supply. The poet speaks about the place on Arasuri hills in his poem 'Ambaji' stating:

"Again the bhadervi
 On Arasuri Hills
 In land without rains.
 It is full moon
 And the carnival without
 Water" (p.16).

The drought created a substantial impact on the ecosystem and agriculture of the affected region on Arasuri Hills. Although droughts can persist for several years, an intense drought can cause significant damage and harm to social economy. This region had experienced a continuous period of dry weather due to lack of rain. In another poem 'In Rains', the poet had mentioned about the means of natural destruction called flood. Flood is an overflow of water that submerges land which is usually dry and they impact the community by affecting their lives and property. This is what the poet had held in this poem stating:

"A poem sails
 Above road lane
 From yesterday's flood report" (p.29).

We find ample evidences of destruction whether it is natural destruction or destruction of innocence and truth in modern life. The poet talks about the childhood innocence in his poem 'After Innocence'. Innocence is usually is associated with youth and ignorance. The loss of one's innocence is associated with the evils of the world and the individual's loss of innocence will impair him or her emotionally and physically and the poet very well explains the loss or destruction of childhood innocence in life. Being in the midst of hardship leads a person to a loss of innocence. An individual is more desperate during tough times and have tendency to be impulsive that leads to a loss of innocence which is a part of everyone's life. Being in a life of drama, betrayal and love the poet upholds the view that they easily cause the character to lose the innocence. The action or experience that causes the loss of innocence is one that is unforgettable in today's modern life whether it is a good memory or a terrible memory the experience makes people guilty, culpable, fearful, dishonest, mischievous, vulnerable and trapped and the most important aspect of the loss of innocence is that it can never be regained. This loss of innocence is exactly what the poet is talking about in his poem 'After Innocence' stating:

“You find yourself
Strange in the fog
Of knowledge
Enter
The world
Of deception” (p.111).

The scars that the loss of innocence leaves never disappears as it is a loss of purity. It occurs when a young person first develops awareness to the suffering evil pain that is entailed in the society around them. The situation is clearly focused by the poet as the person is put into a position where they have to act and respond in a manner that advances their age. He talks about the desire of human beings that destroys an individual forever. Jitendra Aroliya very rightly remarks that: “The poetry collection is based on many themes like religious, social, cultural, and political and economic and personal history. The first half of the book is devoted to concepts such as versification, poetic language, and tradition, the second half is organized along genre lines and examines, nature poetry, sociological experience” (Aroliya, Dr. Jitendra . ‘Kaleidoscopic Vision in Vihang A. Naik’s Poetry: Manifesto’ published in Research Scholar: An International Refereed e-Journal of Literary Exploration. ISSN 2320 – 6101 , Vol. I Issue II, May, 2013). The poem ‘Truth is a Mirror’ reflects the virtue of truth that is fading in today’s modern life. By truth the poet is trying to justify the relevance of the virtue that is truth in human life which we tend to lose and this leads to a verge of destruction of self. The poet mainly depicts upon the importance of truth in a person’s life. Once a person begins lying, it creates an anxiety destroying the self-esteem. Truth means never faking reality in order to gain value and it is the virtue of referring to the practical facts of life, about the purposeful principles that are formed for the reason of making human life possible. They are applied absolutely with regard to the full context of one’s knowledge. Truth in modern life is like mirror where there is no absolute use of truth in human life as the poet states: “Put off

The mask he wears upon
The door of his heart
Where the darkness lies” (p.94)

Morality is concerned or related to truth and it is a matter of the immutable laws of identity, casualty and contradiction. A person is morally responsible for acknowledging all the relevant items of his knowledge pertaining to any given situation. The virtue of truth in the poet’s view is the best tool of success in the life and a backbone of the successful relationship which has the capability to form a well-developed society. Without the virtue of truth it becomes very tough to make real and trustworthy friendship or love bond. A person with a good character, ethics, and morality in life gives encouragement to the self without any bad feeling. His poem ‘Prayer’ reflects the reincarnation of self that is being destroyed in the midst of modern city life. He prays to god to rescue him and to show him some purpose or meaning to life in this absurd city as he states:

“Cities leading
You nowhere
Rescue us
Lord
At once” (p.41).

Love was also being destroyed in this materialistic age where a man possesses everything except love. Love has been treated as

a thing which is not present in a person’s modern life. The poet’s concern can be developed through his poem about the changes that are undertaking from the natural scene to the man-made scene with the advent of science, technology and development in modern city life. In the poet’s opinion love is actually the supreme virtue in life.

In the poems we also find the immediate mention of wars that is created as a result of differences on race, religion and socio-economic dissatisfaction. Human greed, wealth, power and intolerance towards others are the factors or reasons that promote war. In his opinion, war brings untold miseries as well as destruction of political and economic stability. People’s life and daily existence come under threat and the populations are displaced. We also find him mentioning about nuclear war in his poem ‘City’:

“An inspired child
Sketches
Of nuclear war
The world thrives
A polluted plant” (p.118)

Nuclear war can be vastly more destructive in rage and extent of damage is huge in a much shorter time. The result of this kind of war would be devastation to the health and lives of people and to the environment in which we live. Therefore, the poet transcends the idea of consciousness about avoiding war at all cost. The only way to protect our lives and ensure stability in our country is to practice tolerance and respect for each other. War is the greatest catastrophe that can befall on human beings and nature that brings death and destruction.

Conclusion

Man is a highly dynamic creature and it seems that he cannot remain contented merely with works of peace. The development of modern comforts, the extension of knowledge, the means of happy life somehow always leads to harming or destroying the nature in one way or the other. So, his poetry is actually a representation of the destructive features implying importance of natural conservation. This is the destruction theme that the poet deals in his poems. The poet is successful in portraying the intellectual aspects of life. He progresses as a great artist of reflecting the idea of an escape from materialistic life into the world of freedom in order to seek peace. As Jack Magnus a reviewer from USA says: “City Times is a heady mix of beauty, life and visual astray of the abstract sculptures and buildings that form the skeleton of city. Time seemed to stand still for me as I read Naik’s verse. Each word is used with precision; each image is clearly brought forth examined and then transformed into its successor” (Jack Magnus, Reviewer for Reader’s Favourite, USA, 2015). The central theme in quest for physical and spiritual freedom and an intense desire for creation can be very well noted in his poems. His singular method takes the readers into confidence and a personal bond is created as once between the poet and the reader. He has indeed a perfect sense of expression and his style is dictated by the sort of immediacy that he attains with a sober, restrained and dignified tone.

References

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