

Representation of Man-Nature conflict in the novel “The Hunt” by Dharanidhar Wary

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Abstract

The present paper will discuss the different problems that exist, nowadays, between man and nature, their difficulty to coexist, and mostly the ethical issues that result from it. Dharanidhar Wary in his novel ‘*The Hunt*’ has given a vivid description of the conflict of man with that of environment and nature. It has been narrated in the novel that a section of people have been residing in a village adjacent to the Manas National Park since time immemorial. These people use the various resources of the nearby forest for their livelihood. The protagonist of the novel is also one of them and during his early period of life he used to hunt the animals such as deer, pigmy hog etc. of the forest to earn his livelihood. He sells the hunted animals in the nearby market. But the same animal hunter becomes the protector of the forest and wild lives when one day he joined as a forester in the same forest. Thus the novelist Dharanidhar Wary has portrayed two types of character and people in the novel. One section is trying to nurture the nature though they collect their needful resources from the forest; on the other hand another section of people has adopted unfair means for their livelihood by poaching and illegally carrying timbers. The present paper will also discuss the various ways by which a peaceful co-existence of man and nature is possible with reference to the above-mentioned novel.

Key words: Eco-critical, conflict, man, nature, environment, human beings, national park

Introduction:

Assam, situated in the North Eastern part of India, has always been known for her natural resources. The hills and forests, besides enhancing the beauty of the land, contain valuable flora and fauna, some of which are rare in the world. Prior to the coming of British, the forests of Assam did not serve as a very significant source of revenue. Except only few forest products like ivory, aloes, wood etc., revenue was not collected from other sources.

The present paper will discuss the different problems that exist, nowadays, between the environment and human beings, their difficulty to coexist, and mostly the ethical issues that result from it. *Mwihur* (The Hunt) is a significant and important novel in Bodo literature published in 1980. The development and handling of plot, art of characterization and manner of narration is commendable. The theme and the subject matter of this novel are based on the poaching of wild animals by the Bodos and displacement of the Bodo people from the reserved forest. In the novel the livelihood of the Bodo people living in the adjoining area of Manas reserve forest, their culture, religion, politics, social customs, beliefs and practices are depicted through the novel’s major characters. Besides, the lives of the people and the mind ever observant ideas and thoughts come alive as the narrative moves on to its climax.

Dharanidhar Wary in his novel *'The Hunt'* has given a vivid description of the conflict of man with environment and nature. It has been narrated in the novel that a section of people have been living in close proximity to Nature and utilising the natural resources in their day to life. This is true in case of all tribal and forest dwellers in Inida. The novel is set in the Bodo villages like Narenguri, Khasibari Nwrswnghbari—villages which are adjacent to the Manas National Park since time immemorial. These people use the various resources of the nearby forest for their livelihood. The protagonist of the novel is also one of them and during his early period of life he used to hunt the animals such as deer, pigmy hog etc. of the forest to earn his livelihood. He sells the meat of hunted animals in the nearby market. But the same animal hunter becomes the protector of the forest and wild lives when one day he joined as a forester in the same forest. Thus the novelist Dharanidhar Wary has portrayed two types of character and people in the novel. One section is trying to nurture the nature though they collect their needful resources from the forest; on the other hand another section of people have adopted unfair means for their livelihood by poaching and illegally carrying timbers. The story of "The Hunt" is set in the background of the Manas sanctuary in Lower Assam and it is written against the backdrop of a rural Bodo life, interconnected with nature. The characters of the novel are simple village folks, who find satisfaction in simple habits like community fishing, hunting, collection of vegetables and herbs from the forest, having a belief in traditional faiths, rules and regulations etc. It is a portrait of a simple Bodo society. Thus the novel is an eye opener to the world about the basic traits of the community. The novel also witnesses the most significant development in the aesthetic and thematic ordering of fictional events and it also thrown up signs of identity and opened up innovative sites. This novel has not ended up as a flowing narrative only, but it contains a critical evaluation too. The storyline addresses the Bodo situation where protagonist *Golo*, a clandestine hunter-turned disciplined forest guard, had at last to give his life on alter of the ire of the social depredators. He had ingenious love with the unschooled, yet intelligent village damsel *Dodere*, who too died instantly just after hearing the sad news of the killing of her sweetheart. One can come across a vivid picture of the Bodo life be-devilled by poverty and other social and individual failures and disasters.

Community fishing and hunting are seasonal and occasional habit of the Bodos. During Bwisagu and magw they go to the forest for fishing and hunting and they also collect vegetables and herbs which are ban by the Government and forest department. Considering the forests of Assam from an economic point of view, the chief fact that should be mentioned is that the timber of *sal, sam, segun* and *ajhar*, produced in greater Manas formed important articles of export. The author is very much concern over this issue, therefore, he created the character of Loren Master. His character is like path finder of the society. His appearance in the novel makes an extra significance. The local young people are unemployed so they depend on forest resources only rather than self-empowering. So, Loren was very worried and he says-

"...The Bodo race has a long way to go before it can stand on its own feet. What do the Bodo people have? We make country liquor in earthen pitchers, but know not how to make earthen pitchers. We mow grasses, cut down trees and clear the jungles, but have no skill for making the tools we use..."

Therefore, in an effort to unite all the villages lying in the vicinity of the forest area, Loren master formed a new organization. It was called the Agricultural Protection Organization. The main objectives of this organization were to find ways and protect the crops from wild animals, and appeal to the government for reparation in cases where wild animals destroy crops or kill men. In an incident of the novel, an elephant had damaged all the *maisali* rice while they had not matured enough for harvest. And a mad elephant killed two men. As compensations for the losers the organization repeatedly appealed to the Forest Minister, Chief Conservator, etc.

Loren called all those young unemployed people for alternative self-employed works by teaching bamboo works. Various articles, prepared from bamboo are required for day to day use. Bodo people always allot a plot for bamboo cultivation. They nurture bamboo and utilise as necessity. Accordingly, bamboo work is a skilled profession of the Bodos. Most householders require various bamboos made equipment like *karais* and *hamars* to store paddy. These are made of bamboo. Such kinds of articles are extremely durable. But the bamboo workers are kept engaged in preparing articles of daily use such as baskets, bamboo mats, bamboo roofing, sieves, bamboo umbrellas, chairs, ploughing materials etc. Loren master, who is an important character of the novel represent the educated section of the Bodos who gives importance on educating the community and making them aware about Nature and environment. Though the local people steal the valuable trees from the forest and supply it to the urban area, the real profit makers are timber merchants.

Like any tribal people the illiterate and poor section of the Bodos find it difficult to cope with the living conditions in an urban locale. Rather they prefer to sell their land and shift to a remote village near the forest or hill. This was a fact of the Bodo settlement and replacement in the 60s and 70s of the last century. The novel reflects upon the social reality based on the sad plight of the Bodo people of the vicinity of *Manas National Park*. Even The people are unable to cope with the new economy and ways of deceptions and lost their land to the greedy money lenders, left for new plots of land in *Mimang, chilapathar*. The Bodos have no more places to go. The so called tribal belt and blocks are occupied by the others and a few are converted as Government lands. In the novel it is also mentioned that, long time back on these banks of *Bwrsi* River were only Bodo villages. Now there are none. The Bodos have dispersed everywhere, while people from East Bengal have settled here. They built houses on the banks of the *Bwrsi* River and have established themselves, forming villages. Even gradually they occupied the grazing reserves. Now cattle have no place to graze. The corrupted leaders, land department all fed their greed by helping the refugees to take over. So, Loren says.

“I guess our race will just become extinct in this manner.” and

“The strong waves of the *Bwrsi* still dance, it makes even the reeds dance, but not with the music of the flute or the *serja* of the Bodo cowherds. They have been replaced by the Bhatiyali of the refugees.” The novelist is really worried about the demographic change that has posed serious threat to the indigenous population.

The story of “The Hunt” is set in the background of the Manas sanctuary in Lower Assam and it is written against the backdrop of a rural Bodofolks, life, interconnected with nature. The characters of the novel are simple village who find satisfaction in simple habits like community fishing, hunting, collection of vegetables and herbs from the forest, having a belief in traditional faiths, rules and regulations etc. It is a portrait of a simple Bodo society. Thus the novel is an eye opener to the world about the basic traits of a tribal community who has lived a life of struggle in close proximity to Nature. The novel also witnesses the most significant development in the aesthetic and thematic ordering of fictional events and happenings. This novel has not ended up as a flowing narrative only, but it contains a critical evaluation on the Man-nature conflict that has been the most important concern today. The novelist has succeeded in depicting the Man-Nature conflict with the help of skilful character portrayal. As Discussed, the character of Golo along with his village folk depicts the conflict in a meaningful way. The simple tribal people don't want to destroy forest and its resources. There are a few who cause damage to Mother Nature and her resources. For the few inconsiderate people the world has to suffer. The storyline addresses the Bodo situation where protagonist *Golo*, a clandestine hunter-turned disciplined forest guard, had at last to give his life on altar of the ire of the social predators. The tragic ending of the fictional narrative (with tragic death of the unschooled, yet intelligent village damsel *Dodere*, who too died instantly just after hearing the sad news of the killing of her sweetheart) is in conformity with the main thread of the narrative. Together with the main thread of the narrative, we come across a vivid picture of the Bodo life by plagued by poverty and other social evils and encroachment.

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