

NATURE VERSUS CULTURE: MAPPING IMPERIALISTIC ALTERNATIVES IN THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES AND AVATAR

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Abstract:

The innovative experiments and findings benefit the present world with power of predictions about futurist scenario. The Socio-political movements exist, before and at times, provide an in-depth analysis of the upcoming ages and events and the same has clearly influenced the literary genres mainly speculative science fiction genre. The inevitable role played by speculative science fiction genre over catastrophic situations paved a divergent way of thinking to apocalyptic narration. The drastic changes happening in the world scenario and its consequences on living habitat becomes the prime concern of both apocalyptic and science fiction genres. Along with the protection of natural habitat, the need for re-establishing basic human rights along with culture inculcates a new fervour to the science fiction genre and its related literary theories. The imperialistic exploration over the interrelationship of nature and culture led to the emergence of term ecological or eco imperialism in the discipline of social sciences. The world renowned sci-fi fantasy film Avatar thematically discusses about post - apocalyptic era, and the consequences of ecological imperialistic attempt over native land and its people. The socio-political invasion carried out by conquerors reminds all about colonisation, but the factor of disturbing ecology helps the viewer to critically analyse the exploitation in terms of nature and culture. While reading science fiction entitled The Martian Chronicles by Ray Bradbury, the readers come across scientific and political invasion of earth citizens over Mars resulting in the total destruction and subsequent transition of Martians to spiritual beings.

Science Fiction: Literature of Present and Future Era.

With the effective portrayal of the upcoming apocalyptic ages, science fiction readily possesses the capability to address the threats and issues side-lined by experts on various fields. The effective impact of ecology and technology over anthropocentric world offer the probability of chaos over survival and

sustainability, and the same has reflected on science fiction genres. Such thoughts profusely suggest a contemporary value to science fiction genre and its narrative.

The term 'science' has a startling influence upon the materialist discourse of present world. The more familiar colonial approach resulted in the environmental destruction becomes the main topic that gains significance in *The Martian Chronicles* and *Avatar*. Science fiction *The Martian Chronicles* vividly describes about the colonial settlement and changes made in ecology of Mars through scientific and technological implementations. While as, the sci-fi movie *Avatar* focuses on the colonial expeditions through scientific means at Pandora, resulting on the exploitation of Martian ecology.

Eco-Imperialism: Imperial Approach on Environmentalism

The world severely suffered from depletion and destruction of nature by colonial hands before. While watching the movie *Avatar* we come across many such incidents of nature destruction by colonial humans over Pandora habitat. Similar instances can be sensed in the science fiction *The Martian Chronicles* where the human beings pay no heed to the wellbeing of Martians, instead makes them extinct through diseases and ecological destruction. It is at this situation, the term ecological or eco imperialism gets its significance.

In *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe 900-1900*, Alfred Crosby equates the process of colonisation with that of environmental terrorism. According to Crosby, the resulted new diseases and disturbed ecology during colonial endeavours acts as a catalyst for the destruction of native land. A shallower ecological perspective can be felt in Paul Dreissen's usage of the term "eco-imperialism". Paul Dreissen, in his work *Eco Imperialism, Green Power, Black Death*, discusses about the relation between current developed and developing world in terms of anthropocentrism and environmentalism. While explaining the neo-colonial perspectives and its adverse effect upon the developing world, Dreissen focuses on radical mentality of imperialists, corporate social irresponsibility etc. The survival and sustainability of native beings and ecology becomes the main point of discussion on the social theory of ecological or eco imperialism, and the similar sense is reflected on the fictional work *The Martian Chronicles* and the sci-fi fantasy *Avatar*.

One of the main pioneers of science fiction, Ray Bradbury made effective alterations upon science literary genre with his provocative and thematic narrations. Though published in 1950's, *The Martian Chronicles* till this day carries its relevance because of man's everlasting expeditions, discoveries and exploitations. The disillusionment resulted from revolutionary scientific and technical innovations seriously affected the modern and postmodern era.

The Martian Chronicles effectively portrays the chaotic state of humanity, and their ultimate decision of depending on science for further survival. The fiction begins on the first part of 20th century Earth witnessing the launching of rocket expedition to Mars, and their ultimate success after many futile efforts.

Many of Martians lost their lives due to diseases brought by colonial humans. By restructuring Martian land, the settlement of human beings at Mars brings many changes and this becomes the important point of relevance. The terrifying World war and resulted apocalyptic state compelled the newly settled humans in Mars to return back to Earth. The condition of Earth is getting worsened more, and finally one family succeeds in their effort to reach at Mars marking the rebirth of new Martian Civilization.

Alfred Crosby, on Ecological Imperialism, discusses about the biological accidents created by European invaders through their invasion over ecology and culture of native land. The population, due to lack of prior contact to European diseases, succumbed to the diseases. Such experiences led the colonials to affirm on the rightness of imperialist actions.

In The Martian Chronicles, the readers come across the ultimate success of fourth rocket expedition. The members of fourth team don't have any idea about the result of earlier expeditions. It is the archaeologist in team that deciphers about the extinct Martians and their culture.

Though Spender gets killed by Captain, he gets reminded of Spender's words: "But one day Earth will be as Mars is today. This will sober us" (Bradbury 90). They laid Spender's coffin in an ancient Martian tomb yard. Though a short-lived character, Spender realized the significance of maintaining the purity of native Mars and tried hard to protect it from further colonial dangers.

The realization of being the part of Mars civilization marks a new beginning on the lives of human settlers. William Thomas makes his children realize the follies of imperial power authorities and their misuse of science and technology on Earth habitat. The need for protecting the ecology of Mars for further survival and sustainability becomes the ultimate aim for new Martian humans.

Imperialistic Impact over Ecology in Avatar

Hollywood epic science fiction film Avatar got released worldwide in the year 2009. Scifi movie Avatar thematically discusses about the apocalyptic situation in Earth, and Environmental destruction resulted from colonialism. The renowned director James Cameron, on the backdrop of post-climate change Earth scenario, points out the emerging futurist planetary wars between Earthlings and Pandorians for the sake of energy sources. James Cameron, in his interview to The Telegraph, tells: " ... the West can learn from Indigenous peoples is how to live an environmentally conscious life: ' a life that's in balance with the natural cycles of life on Earth'" (web). Through this interview, director points out the necessity of protecting ecology by exhibiting resistance against environmental destruction.

Avatar indirectly discusses the struggle for survival and sustainability that makes human beings to depend on other energy sources for their living. But, in this process, they deliberately forget the ethics of

reconsidering nativist feelings and existence of ecology. The necessity of protecting ecology along with the theological cultural pattern of natives made the sci-fi movie Avatar a serious subject for scrutiny.

The protagonist of the movie, paraplegic former marine Jake Sully, gets the unexpected opportunity to be the part of Earth scientific mission investigating Pandora, due to the sudden demise of his identical twin brother. The movie revolves around the new “Avatar” of Jake and his association with Na'vi community. The Pandora inhabitants are closely associated to their environment, and the same has started to influence Jake's thoughts. Finally, Jake and Na'vi community succeed in their effort to save their motherland from the clutches of Earthly Colonisers and their Unobtainium extraction mission.

Sci-fi movie Avatar puts forward many issues related to the environment including deforestation, exploitation of nature, ecosophy, deep ecological sense etc on the backdrop of neocolonial movements. As Edward W Said mentioned in Orientalism, it's better to attack the orient before they invade occident is the misconception followed in Eco-Imperial movement over Pandora. The features of familiarising geography to the colonials provide the apt ecoterrific effect to this colonial movement.

It is the concern of Neytiri for her ecology that brings Jake to the frame point. She gets horrified when she watches bulldozers crushing their sacred forest. Being a Pandora native, it becomes impossible for her to act against technological exploitation over Nature at such horrified state. The mentality of Selfridge is like a colonial who is interested to grab more profit by not paying any heed to nativist feelings.

CONCLUSION:

The science fictional work The Martian Chronicles and sci-fi movie Avatar shares the common thematic pattern of apocalypse and invasion over the other planet. In The Martian Chronicles, Ray Bradbury gives a detailed description on man's expedition over Mars, destruction of natives, world war and re-birth of new Martian humans. Whereas sci-fi movie Avatar describes the neo-colonial Earth expedition over Pandora for grabbing valuable mineral Unobtainium by destroying the ecology, native land destruction questioning survival, and natives regaining their Pandora at the end. Though in both the fictional plots, imperial humans craving for profit by destroying ecology of native land gets no desired result marking their attempts as futile. It is the imperial mentality and its relation to environmental destruction that makes topic of ecological or eco imperialism more significant in present times. Several instances of such ecological and imperial influence over human lives can be witnessed throughout the scifi.

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