



ECO-TOURISM: THROUGH THE LENS OF WORDSWORTH'S POETRY

DR. MANJUSHA DHUMAL

Head & Associate Professor

Dept. Of English

Prof. Ramkrishna More College

Akurdi, Pune (MS) INDIA

ABSTRACT

Though a modern concept, Wordsworth had thought about Eco-Tourism as early as the nineteenth Century and this, very much peeps through his literature whether it is a poem, a prose work like The Guide to the Lakes, letters or pamphlets. Ecological awareness was very much a part of Wordsworth's sensitivity. This will be projected through this study.

Key words: Eco-Tourism, utilitarianism, Lake District

DISCUSSION:

Eco-tourism is totally a modern concept. The United Nations launched the year 2002 as the International year of Eco-tourism to promote responsible travel and to raise public awareness about the pastime's effects on nature. Louise Fr. Chette, U N Deputy Secretary- General said that the objective was to enjoy the planet's natural resources while preventing any negative impact. Eco-tourism can help support the conservation of eco systems that are so necessary to sustain life on our planet.

Safeguarding Ecology has become an all encompassing global issue. The brutal utilization of nature for the accomplishment of man's greed has caused unevenness in the eco system. Man has become strangely alienated from the world in which he lives. The whole ecological system has been topsy –turveyed. Our environment has become fragile due to the impact of greatly increased number of leisured people with cash and credit cards. Man feels a great need for change from the urbanized, stressful and crime-ridden places to wilderness and silent valleys and mountains. It is here that tourism comes in. "Back to Nature" is what man seeks

DR. MANJUSHA DHUMAL

1P a g e



today. However the over use of such natural environments by the tourist has led to the victimization of our planet.

Though a modern concept, Wordsworth had thought about Eco-Tourism as early as the nineteenth Century and this, very much peeps through his literature whether it is a poem, a prose work like The Guide to the Lakes, letters or pamphlets. Ecological awareness was very much a part of Wordsworth's sensitivity. The crumbling relationship between man and nature highly perturbed him. He definitely knew the consequences and the impact that the so called progress would have on environment. In the late 18th century thinkers and economists like Adam Smith and Jeremy Bentham were more concerned with utilitarianism at the cost of environmental disruptions and man's existence. It was William Wordsworth who, thro his works has pointed out the dangers of consumerism or utilitarianism. Just because Wordsworth was not Adam Smith, he wrote about the 'Wealth of Nature' and not the 'Wealth of Nations'. Wordsworth's writings sketched fair pictures of what the scene would be like when man encroached up on the territories of nature. The dismantling of economic structure, the disruption of rural scene emerges through his literature. His observation was most transfused with reason and he proclaimed the deepest truth and uttered the strongest feelings. How could the environment prospered if its structure was disfigured by man?

In 1844 Wordsworth put up a single handed opposition to the Kendel-Windermere Railway that was being introduced in the Lake District for the tourist who flocked to watch its beauty and a few went to the extent of settling there. The projectors declared that their main objective was to place the beauties of the Lake Country within the reach of those tourists who could not afford to pay for private conveyance. But Wordsworth was very much aware about the injury that would be done to the morals of the inhabitants. Men would lament this facility by the sacrifice of so much of its quiet and beauty. He was totally against the said Project. He questioned, "What would be the result of facilitating tourists to this extent but a destruction of the beauty of the country which the parties came in search of? Would not this be pretty much like the child's cutting up his drum to learn where the sound came from?" (Wordsworth and the Victorians: Stephan Gill, Clarendon Press, New York 1998 Pg. 346) He knew that the Railway would unsettle life that was good in itself. The tiny region would not be able to cope up with the large number of tourist. The speedy access to the choicest beauty spots would never give them profitable pleasure, but it would certainly destroy a wholeness that is fragile. To pour forth his grudge against the project he wrote a sonnet on the projected Kendel-Windermere Railway, which was first printed in The Morning Post, dated 12th October 1844.

*Is there no nook of English ground secure
From rash assault? schemes of retirement sown*

DR. MANJUSHA DHUMAL

2Page



.....how can they this blight endure?
And must he too the ruthless change bemoan
Who Scorns a false utilitarian lure
'Mid his paternal fields at random thrown?
Baffle the threat
Plead for thy peace, thou beautiful romance
Of Nature: if human hearts be dead,
Speak
.....protest against the wrong

(Wordsworth and the Victorians: Stephan Gill, Clarendon Press, New York 1998 Pg. 146)

The project was very offensive to a large majority of proprietors through whose lands the line, after it came in view of the Lake was to pass. Along with the sonnet was printed a letter:

The degree and kind of attachment, which many of the yeomanry fade to their small inheritances, can scarcely be overrated. Near the house of one of them stands a magnificent tree, which a neighbour of the owner advised him to fell for profit's sake "Fell it !" exclaimed the Yeoman, "I had rather fall on my knees and worship it". It happens I believe that the intended Railway would pass through little property and I hope that an apology for the answer will not be thought necessary by one who enters into the strength of feeling.
William Wordsworth

The letter speaks volumes about Wordsworth's concern for his environment as well as his emotional attachment to the simpletons of the countryside. In modern times too, the situation is not very different. Wherever railways enter it is not without dismantling the ecology, murdering the valleys and the mountains and rupturing the lives of the inhabitants. In 1876, what Wordsworth had feared thirty years earlier rematerialized – the threat to extend the Windermere railway line towards the north, along the Lake shore to Ambleside, Grasmere, and beyond. This crusade was later taken up by Robert Somervell, a Windermere resident and Ruskin who campaigned against the despoliation of the sweet landscapes of England against the degradation of environment in which artisans had to live and work against the economic forces accelerating the moral decline of the urban masses. He dismissed the whole idea of swift transit for the workers where they could enjoy scenery. He opined that the rail road company could only open taverns round Grasmere which would soon be transformed into a pool of drainage with a beach of ginger beer bottles. Later on Ruskin's hatred for railways intensified and it produced what must be one of the most poetic denunciations ever



of the steam monster, “They are to me the loathsome form of delivery now extant, animated and deliberate earthquakes, destructive of all wise social habit or possible natural beauty, carriages damned soul on the ridges of their own graves” (Wordsworth and the Victorians; Stephen Gill, Clarendon Press, New York Pg. 250). Somervell’s attack on the same subject was a bit restrained. It focused directly on the local threat to the Lake District. He did not add anything to what Wordsworth had already written. It was Wordsworth who provided the bulk of Somervell’s environmentalist case and encouraged them to battle the cause. The poet’s concern was for posterity. He was keen to preserve some of the most beautiful scenery in the world. The sapling planted by Wordsworth in regard to environmental awareness took shape of a huge tree. A Wordsworth society was formed and Hardwicke Drummond Rawnsley spoke about the history of conservation in Great Britain. He mentioned Professor Campbell Fraser’s wise opinion which was that the vales of Cumberland and Westmoreland, changed with the spirit of Wordsworth should be left as Nature’s own English University in the age of great cities.

Wordsworth had realized that beauty was not just a national resource for pleasure and refreshment but it served a higher and vital purpose.

In 1780, Wordsworth and his under graduate friend Robert Jones traveled nearly three thousand miles, walking at least two thousand of them, many over mountainous terrain, at a rate of more than 20 sometimes or even 30 miles a day. His Cambridge friends condemned the whole scheme as ‘mad and impracticable’. But today we find Nature lovers arranging similar kind of walking tours. What Wordsworth attempted ages back is exactly a prototype of the modern Trekking Clubs. Today conservationists and Nature lovers are taking up mountain treks and trying hard to assist Nature in the survival of species that remain.

Wordsworth had also proposed in his Guide to the Lakes that the Lake District should be made a sort of national property in which everyman had a right and interest who had an eye to perceive and heart to enjoy. We can very well see that so many years ago he had come up with the idea of a National Park. Wordsworth was also utterly disappointed and upset when Grasmere was flocked by tourists and many new buildings came up. He strongly protested by saying, “A Temple of abomination this house will stare you in the face from every part of the vale and entirely destroy its character and simplicity and seclusion” (William Wordsworth – A Biography by Hunter Davies, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London Pg 271) Doesn’t the concept of Eco-tourism peep in here? It was none other than Wordsworth who could think so much about conservation of Natural elements in the environment. Wordsworth was not just poet who wrote about daffodils and solitary reapers metaphorically. But he thought far



beyond these. He was a seer – a man who knew the important role of nature in man's existence, a man who saw tomorrow.

Contemporary writings do show ecological concern but it will not be an exaggeration if we tag Wordsworth as our contemporary. It was this visionary who has a deep insight and it was he who initiated the movements that seem to gain momentum today to save this endangered planet.

REFERENCES:

- 1 Abrams, M.H, The Mirror and the Lamp, Oxford University Press, 1953.
2. Bate, Jonathan, Romantic Ecology: Wordsworth and the Environmental Tradition, London: Routledge, 1991.
3. Bramwell, Anna, Ecology in the Twentieth Century: A History, London: Yale University Press, 1989.
4. Cowell, Raymond(Ed), Critics on William Wordsworth .Readings in Literary Criticism, London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1973.
5. Nisbet, E.G, Leaving Eden-To Protect and Manage the Earth, Cambridge University Press, 1991.
6. Price, Martin F (Ed), People and Tourism in Fragile Environments, John Wiley and Sons, New York, 1996.
7. . Stelzig, Eugene L, All Shades of Consciousness, Wordsworth's Poetry and the Self in Time, Mouton Press 1975.
8. Wordsworth Jonathan, The Music of Humanity, Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd., 1969