



RESEARCH ARTICLE



LANGSTON HUGHES' "IN TIME OF SILVER RAIN": ITS CONCERNS AND SIGNIFICANCE IN THE LIGHT OF GLOBAL ECOLOGICAL CRISIS

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ABSTRACT



In the present time the whole world is on verge of entering into its dystopia. The Earth's physical environment has been overexploited and contaminated by the humans in anticipation of their unbreakable lavish lives. The exploitation and pollution pertain to deforestation, scarcity of rain or drought, climate Change, acid rain, global warming, etc.

Langston Hughes is a very special and renowned creative writer of the 20th century American literature. His poetry also reflects the ecological sensitiveness or concern which can be decisive in terms of global ecological harmony if it is wholeheartedly digested by both the readers and the social masses.

The present paper explores one of his ecosensitive poems, "In Time of Silver Rain", and brings to light in front of the entire world with respect to how this particular poem is loaded with an evergreen ecological significance or implication in order to transform this ecologically degraded planet into an ecotopia.

The Survival of plants, trees, flowers, bees, insects, mammals, etc., depend on the satisfactory rainfall/ downpour and its sensible storage in all parts of the world. It is the universal truth that the natural source of water on the Earth is none other than the rain and that is why the paper decodes the poet's eco-friendly mantra or message to the world regarding what kind of measure the humans have to take in order to ensure timely rainfall/ rainwater across the globe.

Keywords: *Ecology, Ecocriticism, Global, Crisis, scarcity, ecosensitive conservation.*

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**INTRODUCTION**

Ernst Haeckel, the German Biologist and scientist, was the first person to coin the term Ecology in 1866. Ecology is multidisciplinary in its nature and scope which is studied in psychology, biology, geography, history, literature, etc. It denotes the relationship of organisms and their physical environment. According to National Geographic (headquartered in Washington DC, USA),

"Ecology is the study of organisms and how they interact with the environment around them. An ecologist studies the relationship between living things and their habitats. In order to learn about the natural world, ecologists must study multiple aspects of life ranging from the moss that grows on rocks to the wolf population in Yellowstone National Park. In order to research the environment, scientists ask questions, such as: How do the organisms interact with the living and non living factors around them? What do organisms need to survive and thrive in their current environment"?

It was the American professor Cheryll Glotfelty who played a commendable role in bringing the term Ecocriticism into its full limelight and recognition in all parts of the world after William Ruckert's strong plea to the whole world to apply Ecology in the study of literature. Cheryll Glotfelty writes that it (ecocriticism) is the study of literature and the physical environment. Peter Barry in the second edition of his very popular book entitled "Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Culture Theory" talks about the commendable and innovative role played by the ecocritics to pinpoint the environmental crisis: "...they (ecocritics) major works from major ecocentric perspective, with particular attention to the representation of the natural world. They extend the applicability of a range of ecocentric concepts using them of the other things in the natural world - concepts as growth and energy, balance and imbalance, symbiosis and mutuality, and sustainable and unsustainable use of energy and resources..." (Barry, p. 252)

Langston Hughes was an American poet, playwright and social activist who was born in Joplin, Missouri, USA in 1901. He is the pioneer of a very innovative literary genre called Jazz poetry; he is universally recognised as the front leader of the Harlem Renaissance along with the poets such as Georgia Douglas Johnson, Claude Mackay, etc. These poets of the Harlem Renaissance wholeheartedly did a benevolent or humanitarian service to expose the beauty and suffering of the black people and raised their collective voice in defence or support of the original identity of their community; they inculcated the activist dimensions in their poems which were meant to liberate his people from the white stereotypes.

Besides his social activism, he exploited his poetical genius to draw the people's attention towards the beauty and value of the objects of nature. His ecocritical poems advocate the ecological diversity as well as harmony for a healthy physical environment on this planet.

"In time of Silver Rain

The earth puts forth new life again,

Green grasses grow

And flowers lift their heads,

And over all the plain

The wonder spreads".

These eco-sensitive lines of the poem project Langston Hughes' jolly mood during the time of rainfall and the words "Silver rain" undoubtedly refer to the satisfactory and uninterrupted falling of the rain which naturally provides vigor and vitality to flora and fauna of the earth. When there is the occurrence of silver rain, it is definitely the first rainfall or downpour of the season. The poem, "In Time of Silver Rain", is loaded with ecological concerns which establish the importance of seasonal rainfalls in terms of the germination of various kinds of seeds of flowers and plants, timely growth of green grasses as a food supplement/fodder to cattle, the interrupted growth of flowers, plants and



trees, etc. The green grasses always create the eco-aesthetic view across the natural landscape and the sight of its heavenly role in feeding the hungry cows, buffalos, goats, rabbits, etc., naturally establishes nature in a role of a mother to make both animals and humans enjoy happy and prosperous lives on the earth. Timely rainfall is quite essential in terms of the perfect growth of the plants of wheat, maize, paddy, etc., as the shortage of rain even during the time of monsoon would shatter the farmers' hope of earning a satisfactory amount of money from selling these food-grains in the market. In the above lines Langston Hughes reiterates the significance of rain as this poetical composition is undoubtedly the product of his concern over the scarcity of water across the world. The humans themselves are in one way or other responsible for facing the situation of famine because over the years the trees have been demolished in name of establishing the industrial towns and cities. Moreover, the wild forests often become the victims of enormous fires which burn healthy trees and that is why the humans must get rid of any anthropocentric conduct which can make them stand on the verge of getting victimized in a dystopian world. Suitable to this context, it is pertinent to quote Pramod Nayar's eye-opening words in the light of present plight of the environment: "..... mankind is efficiently committing eco-side, making the planet inhospitable for life of mankind". (Nayar, p.241)

In order to enjoy the bliss of silver rain, the people hailing from different parts of the globe have to be unanimous with respect to rendering their services to the environmental conservation.

"In time of Silver rain

The butterflies lift their silken wings

To catch a rainbow cry

And trees put forth new leaves to sing".

In the above lines Langston Hughes successfully exploits his eco-sensitive mind to make the entire human race accept the healing power of the rain in order to energize both living and non living things for

their long survival in the natural world. The poet has chosen the authentic examples of butterflies and trees, for they are capable of setting the universal truth of the allround development of even the tiny creatures or objects under the holistic touch of the rain water. The "silken wings" refer to the butterflies' tender or fragile wings which are destined to lose its vigor or flying power in anticipation of the first falling of the silver rain. It means that the drops of this rain are decisive to make the butterflies unfold their wings and fly high across the sky. To surmount the enormous height of the rainbow during the rain is impossible for any creature of the earth, for it requires the supernatural effort or power. But the poet is so much excited to behold the rainfalls that he expects the butterflies to break the boundary of the limitless sky and reach the world of the rainbow.

The poet does not showcase the artificial pictures or incidents in his eco-friendly poems, for the lines of the poem wear the testimony of his live experience of watching young boys and girls enjoying the rain and singing melodious songs in its glorification. The passing boys and girls seem to be the school going students who often are seen crossing the roadway which makes them happily reach their school. In other words, the lines of this eco-poetry reflect the autobiographical touch of the poet's own childhood days as it is impossible to fabricate this type of stanza without being the eye-witness of the happenings which happen during the falling of the silver rain.

" In joy beneath the sky

As down the roadway

Passing boys and girls

Go singing too,

In time of silver rain when spring

And life are new".

The rain of the spring brings a special smell in the atmosphere and the creatures inside the soil naturally come out the soil to breathe the fresh air after passing the days of boredom of the previous season. It is definitely the rain of a season which does



the environmental service to living and non living things which exist in nature. The rain of the spring symbolizes revival, hope greenery, etc., across the physical environment.

The concluding lines of the poem unravel Langston Hughes' hearty veneration as well as appreciation to the rainfalls of the spring, for it brings unbreakable smiles on the workers' faces who desperately wait for it as they need enough water in their agricultural fields in terms of the timely irrigation of the seasonal crops. It means that the silver rain is directly related to the humans' hopes and aspirations. If there happens the dearth or scarcity of the rain, it brings famine on the earth which not only gives serious damage to living organisms but also to all other components of their natural environment. The dearth of water or poor rainfall must be listed in the category of global ecological crisis as McCloskey defines it as follows:

" a crisis that threatens simply the quality of life to be enjoyed by human beings but the very survival of the human race; that ecology reveals that Homo Sapiens is, or is in danger of becoming, an endangered species; and more, that man is "ravaging" the earth in a reckless, irresponsible way, doing "irreversible damage" to it and thereby rendering it of less value in itself and for its members, including mankind".(H.J. p.3)

CONCLUSION

The poem, "In Time of Silver Rain", revolves around the global significance of rain water because a number of human beings and animals, plants and trees often don't survive as a consequence of poor rainfall even in the rainy season. Langston Hughes has definitely proved himself as an eco-poet of utmost ecological wisdom and the poem motivates the Earth's people to render their services to the conservation of rain water in tanks, ponds, wells, etc., that would undisputedly work as the best diagnosis of stopping any victimized region of the world becoming a devastating example of starvation. The poem is truly eco-friendly in its composition and that is why all the teaching and research institutions

must include Langston Hughes' poems in their academic curriculum, inspiring the professors, researchers and students to plant various kind of trees and not let the Earth suffer from the shortage of rain water. It is quite clear from the poem that the water of the spring season revitalizes flowers so that they might be healthy in their growth and satisfactory in number even during their usage in big ceremonial events. A flower symbolizes affection, care, love for dear ones and they are also gifted or exchanged in social gatherings or parties. Moreover, a flower is a token of brotherhood in every part of the world. Langston Hughes' "In Times of Silver Rain" has a strong ecological appeal and significance for its heroic welcome and adoration to rain in the light of ongoing ecological crisis in a modern world.

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