



BIOREGIONAL READING OF THE NOVEL THE LAST WAVE

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ABSTRACT- Bioregionalism is a movement which aims to evade the political boundaries in the world so as to replace it with Bioregional boundaries. This idea on its wheels can help the world to slow down the influence of industrial modernization. The modern life style isolated human beings from the nature and as the result of it, each day Earth is facing enormous Environmental problems like Ozone depletion. This kind of life style is destroying the Eco-balance of the Earth. Bioregionalism- one of the Ecological movements flourishing now-a-days, to regain or to establish a relationship between human beings and nature. The *Last Wave* which portrays the natural system and sustainable way of living is analysed through the lens of Bioregionalism. This article works on some major Bioregional Ideas which the novel carries in its narratives. The Bioregional ideas like Place, Dwelling, Eco-Consciousness and Re-inhabitation conveyed through the novel helps the fiction readers to have a better understanding about the interconnection between the human beings and nature.

Key Words: Bioregionalism, Bioregion, watersheds, Place, Dwelling, Re-inhabitation, Eco-Consciousness.

I. INTRODUCTION

Bioregionalism started in the mid-1970s in Western united states. It is a movement against the fast-pace living of human beings in a modernized way. The Bioregionalism essentially propagates the harmony between nature and human beings. This idea challenges the political boundaries to reconnect human beings into the natural system of living. All nations in the world are concerned about the Sustainable development of their country. According to the Brundtland Report, Sustainable development is defined as the “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” (Alexander 1987) and the Bioregionalism movement which challenges the political boundaries can develop sustainable development into a reality.

A bioregion is literally and etymologically a life-- unique region definable by natural (rather than political) boundaries with a geographic, climatic, hydrological, and ecological character capable of supporting unique human and nonhuman living communities. In other words, referred to as a life place (Thayer 2003)

The novel *Last Wave* is a story that happens in the Andaman and Nicobar Bioregion. These bioregions are known as the Indian archipelago in the Bay of Bengal. Its lands and watersheds contain vast bio-diversity which guards the natural system of living in the territories of Bay of Bengal. Seksharia weaved the story based on this bioregion in a comprehensive way. He tried to point out each and every bioregion of Island. It is not a constraint work which relies upon a small portion of the Island. But it touched all its bio-diversity like forest, watersheds, species and lives of the people. Throughout the novel, the interconnectedness can be observed as the inbuilt factor of this story. It emphasizes on the interactions and interconnections between human beings and places. It evades the boundaries set between the human beings and nature. The protagonist of the novel Harish and one of the main characters Seema who limited their life into themselves developed interaction towards their surroundings. The author covered almost all places in the island like Port Blair, Mayabundar, Webi. Seksharia used the places as itself to portray the storyline.

II. BIOREGIONALISM IN THE LAST WAVE

The Bioregionalism essentially stresses the importance of place in the natural system of living. And this concept focuses on the interactions that takes place in the land. It essentially points out to the homely feeling and a sense of belonging that have to be developed in human beings. The place we lives is our home and a sort of attachment that leads to interactions with it helps the living livelier with the natural system. “A bioregion refers both to geographical terrain and a terrain of consciousness- to a place

and the ideas that have developed about how to live in that place.” (Berg 1978) The protagonist of the novel Harish Kumar from Hyderabad is a person who suffered with lots of loss in his life. His marriage ended in a troublesome way. His career also did not turn up well. And to help him in this distress situation, Prasad gives him an opportunity to work on the Andaman and Nicobar project of a magazine. His journey was like a runaway from the issues. But once he reached the island, he felt it as a “remote place” (Sekhsaria 2014) Harish and his colleagues in Hyderabad found life strenuous as they were compelled to bother more upon building careers, relationships and more. But once Harish entered into the Island, the narration changes. The author works on the fiction in such a way that the readers also detach themselves from the busy modern life of Hyderabad and enters into the zone of nature. Through Harish, the author described the scenic beauty of the Island:

“spread over more than two acres of land, it occupied a little rocky outcrop located a small distance from the edge of the ocean. Towards the southern side of the campus was a small patch of mangroves. Beyond that and towards the right, the land climbed up a gentle slope to a little plateau that had a beautiful view of the small bay.” (Sekhsaria 2014)

The author here gives the idea of belonging to a place through the life of the protagonist. The Shift of the narration of busy life of Hyderabad to the scenic beauty of Island is itself depicting the protagonist’s sense of oneness and belonging. Initially, Harish felt it as a “remote place” and Interaction with nature is a first-time experience for him. This bioregion does not have any offices, malls like cities, he apprehended that it would be a place where living was difficult. But in the end of the story, he felt about the Island in a different way; his journey in those watersheds, the days he spent in the middle of forest and the evening walks on the beach changed him. His attachment toward nature enables readers to understand that Harish would not be able to run away from the Island even though he is amidst losses and crisis: “Going away, even if for a while, they were arguing would help him. He was coming around to accepting that, but something he couldn’t quite place a finger on was still disturbing him.....and where would the people of these Islands go?” (Sekhsaria 2014) Thanks to Andaman that Harish not only became of conscious of the environment around him, he also understood the significance of it. He learns to live in coordination with nature and environment in the place. Thus, the life of protagonist in the novel reveals the important aspect of Bioregionalism: Harish could reimagine his surrounding as one that sustained his life.

Another central aspect of Bioregionalism is the natural system of living. It defines how each and every species living in harmony with each other. The interdependent interaction happens in the natural ecosystem in a positive way. The most important factor of natural system is that it is liberated if not hindered by greedy men. This novel depicts the beautiful way of living of Jarawa community in the natural system. Men living in Andaman and Nicobar know how to make nature as a source that boosts ones Economy. Felix narrates the way they collect Honey from the Honey comb on the tree. To protect from being stung by Bees they applied some juice as Bee toxicant. “The Jarawa used the leaves of a plant called tomale, the juice of which works as a bee-toxicant.” (Sekhsaria 2014) and they extracted honey without harming both Honey Bees and their bodies. This community knows how to coexist with nature without dilapidating it. Felix also transformed a lot from being a timber laborer to a natural habitat. He has learned this extracting method from Jarawas and he voices out against the idea of plantation of coconut trees in the forest of Jarawa. He angrily reacted when he found the welfare department harming Jarawa’s natural way of living. The Jarawas and Felix who were friends, once fought with one another. The Jarawa arrows made wounds on his body but he later learnt to alter his perceptions and also Reinhabit in this place. In Bioregionalism Re inhabitation means, “becoming native to a place through becoming aware of the particular ecological relationship that operate within and around it.” (Berg and Dasmann 1977) And it was his twentieth year in the forest. He was not ready to move to the mainland. “Just as bioregions are more than purely physiographical entities, reinhabitation, one of bioregionalism’s core concepts, has always been about more than planting trees and building sustainable homes from recycled materials in degraded and abandoned places.” (Lynch et al 2012) It shows how he reinhabited himself after facing so many life challenging situations in the forest and he was not siding the capitalist agenda anymore, he learnt to live being a part of the natural system.

The novel emphasizes on developing Eco-Consciousness in the characters. Edward Casey in one of his essays, *How to get from space to place* says, “To live is to live locally, and to know is first of all to know the place one is in.” (Feld and Basso 1996) Eco Consciousness, helps people to dwell in the place and understands the functioning of natural system. Seema, even though she was from this bioregion she did not know about the Giant Leatherback turtles which is among the most vulnerable species. After so many years of her living in the Island, her meeting with David-Researcher and Harish made her to know about

her surroundings. Until that meeting, she was not aware of it. Her travel through the watersheds, meeting the Jarawa gave her a realization about her detachment with the surroundings and her insensitiveness towards the natives of Andaman. It was later she learnt to appreciate the nature and also develop a concern for the natives: "The Jarawa are the people of the forest, aren't they? They should be allowed to live the way they want to." The awareness about her place helped her to speak for the people who lived in the system of nature. Uncle Pame, another notable character in the story turned Eco-conscious. When Jarawas killed his parents, he visited their place to take revenge and kill one at least. Later he regretted for it. His association with the Researcher David shows his dedication to the Island and its people. These two-native people of the Island developed an awareness about the preservation of the forest and watersheds. And their Eco-consciousness helps the Island to regain its natural system.

In each and every encounter with the nature Seema had achieved a transformation. Her journey through the watersheds helped her to remove all her fear and complex ideas about the nature. In the essay, *Bioregional possibilities in Vermont*, Christopher McGrory Klyza says that, "One of the key reasons- if not the key reason-for moving in a bioregional direction is to improve the interactions between humans and nature, to strive for a place in which natural and human communities are sustainable." (McGinnis 1999) In a Bioregional perspective the interaction with the nature holds an important role in sustaining the life. And the transformation of Seema in this novel itself is an example to answer the question about the importance of interaction. It can change the perceptions about the nature. Seema as a lady who lives in a modern lifestyle, naturally have a terror feeling about the nature and its species. The author portrays all her terror feelings while describing her encounter with the nature.

"Dolphin! She shrieked. Nothing could have prepared her for this moment. The dolphin skimmed along just under the surface of the water, keeping pace with the kirloskars. The morning light passed through the waves, making abstract white patterns on the darker body of infinite elegance. The beautiful creature swam along for a short while with silken grace, and then broke through the water surface emerging for a few moments." (Sekhsaria 2014)

The beautiful narration about this creature arouses a caring feeling toward the Dolphin in readers and so, the interaction with it transformed Seema to watch the Dolphin with affection and love. The same instance again happened in the novel when she watches the Giant Leather Turtle for the first time in her life. "Seema watched intently as the turtle dragged herself a couple of feet and stopped for rest. She was panting heavily." Seema's encounter with this creature also changed her fear feeling about the nature and its creatures. She felt those moments are precious and packed with the diversity of nature. "An ancient creature, the renewal of life, an extraordinary event; she was grateful to be alive." And This instance supports the bioregionalism idea about interaction. According to the ideas of Bioregionalism, "...the interaction of humans with their natural environment distinguishes bioregionalism from other forms of ecosystem management and provides the theoretical basis for managing resources as an interrelated whole." (Diffenderfer and Dean 1997) Thus, the novel portrays Seema's encounters with the nature which created an Eco-consciousness in her.

Laurence Buell, in one of his books, *The Environmental Imagination* says that "Environmental crisis involves a crisis of the imagination the amelioration of which depends on finding better ways of imagining nature and humanity relation to it." This explanation points out the problems of the modern generation like Seema and Harish. Both of them were far away from their own Environment. "Finding better ways of imagining nature and humanity" involves hard work and dedication. David-The researcher turned out to be a resource person for them to reimagine the relation between the nature and humans. Seema and Harish got enlightened by his passion for the nature. He was not only a researcher in the Island, rather he was one among the strong voice in the Island against the illegal activities that taking place in the forest. Harish also saw his fury on his face when they found a foreign intruder in the forest.

David was not amused in the least. He hadn't said a word, but it was obvious that he was angry. David, Harish realized, was not looking at the two men standing before him. He kept staring at the tent. A third head eventually appeared – a white man in perhaps his mid-forties. (Sekhsaria 2014)

More than a researcher David dedicated his life to voice against the illegal activities in the forest. And also to take care of the forest. David become an inspiration to Harish to speak and work for the nature. So, when observes it in a Bioregional perspective, David became the resource person for both of them to redefine their perceptions about the nature. It is the journey arranged by David made all this changes in the life of Harish and Seema. As youngsters they learn to re imagine their observations about the nature.

The Last Wave, as a whole turned out to be the story of interconnectedness. It beautifully portrayed the events which link the nature with human beings. If human beings have the power for choice, nature also had the power to react against the exploitation. Both have powers to attack and protect each other. Joseph W Meeker, in one of his books "*The Comedy of Survival*" says that literature plays an important role in depicting the role of both nature and human beings. He says the works, "... Should be examined carefully and honestly to discover its influence upon human behavior and the natural environment-to determine what role, if any, it plays in the welfare and survival of mankind and what insight it offers into human relationships with other species and with the world around us." (Meeker 1997)

Here in this novel also the author depicts the powers vested upon both in nature and human beings. The most prominent works in the world portrays the interconnections between man and nature. Man competes with the nature to dominate it without realizing its strength. In this novel, Seksharia described Tsunami and its vindictiveness that mutes man's power. "The water gushed deep into the forest beyond: There was a couple of moments stillness, and then it hissed viciously as it turned back, withdrawing with a force and a vengeance that made the incoming wave appear benign in comparison." (Seksharia 2014)

The author goes on to portray the powerful waves of the Tsunami as the outcome of furious nature that stirred against the human beings for exploiting the natural system. The vast and wide forest of the bioregion Andaman and Nicobar became half square meter of its actual area. The timber extraction made the forest into a blank land. The pain of loss of natural disasters is a predominant theme of the novel, author starts the novel with the pain of life in Harish life then it extended to Seema and to Uncle Pame, Felix and finally with the death of Erema-the Jarawa man, due to tsunami. Here the author tries to connect the loss of pain from human beings to the nature. Tsunami is a warning for human beings to get back into the circle of the natural system. People always tend to avoid the nature that shape their life. Hence it widens the gap between nature and human beings. Man is totally ignorant of their role in bringing disasters like tsunami. Through the eradication of natural environment. The very disaster aware about there I in Tsunami. It is high time that they should realize that even a small plastic can affect the fertility of soil. They actually do not care in what all ways a small plastic carry bag can infect the fertility of the soil. And they are not taking into consideration that the enormous building structures established after destroying the fertile land can alter the geographical land mass. Sekhsaria portrayed the waves of Tsunami as the result of deforestation. He weaved a fictional interconnection between the events. Overall, it shares the message that a natural disaster is not an isolated incident rather it is the end result after consequence of actions of. "Only if the systems of production draw largely on local resources and do not degrade the ecosphere, and only if people consider the long-term ecological implications of productions, can bioregionalism become effective." (Young 2000) And this novel has made an accomplishment to educate the readers onto the path of Bioregionalism. It discussed both the problems and need for the preservation.

III. CONCLUSION

Bioregionalism is an inevitable way of living in a world which aims to attain a sustainability in all the paths of life. This concept of Bioregionalism clarifies the doubts of eco-friendly thoughts. Now-a-days the lives of the people are immersed in the modernized lifestyle and it is filled of the industrial innovations. But the natural disasters happening all over the world and studies shows each and every day Earth is a step closer to its destruction. The exploitation of nature has led to the level of complete destruction of the planet. The sustainability of bioregions is changing drastically. And it also aims to slow down the modernized life style of the people and help them to dwell in their place equipped with Eco-consciousness. The Novel *The Last Wave* is a work which helps the people to understand the problems of their modernized lifestyle and most importantly, it helps the people to generate an idea about the natural system. The Author reveals the idea of place, re inhabitation, interaction and interconnections, and dwelling in this novel. While explaining the concept of bioregionalism the author makes an elaborate discussion on the environment existing in the Andaman island and as well emphasis on man's interaction with the nature. This section helps the readers to develop Eco consciousness and the importance of bioregionalism.

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