

Gorden J.L. Ramel's "Mankind does not Agree": An Eco-critical Interpretation

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Abstract: The undertaken study titled 'Gorden J.L. Ramel's "Mankind does not Agree": An Ecocritical Interpretation' is an attempt to evaluate the level of kinship between human beings and other entities of Nature apart from ascertaining whether civilization's actions accommodate the ecological aspects or not, for sustaining an equipoise between the organic world and the man-made terrain. It is a modest endeavour to decode the eco-supportive symbolic message conveyed by the poem to the denizens of mega-materialistic world, which driven by the illusion of superiority turns too egotistic to recognize enigmatic phenomenon of the magnificent Nature. By highlighting anthropocentric rigidities and callousness practised against the non-human entities the poem wisely intends to make us aware of the deteriorating situation and to propose solutions and ways to reduce this ascending fissure between civilization and Nature.

Keywords: *Ecocriticism, Anthropocentrism, Nature, Mankind, bird.*

"Humanity's progress, particularly since the mid-19th century, has been largely the result of our ability to get and use what planet Earth has to offer. All told, the food we eat, the timber we cut, and the water we draw amounts to an astounding one-third to one-half of global ecosystem production. But humans are part of nature, and like every other species on the planet, we depend upon healthy ecosystems for our survival. Nature provides us essentials like clean water, food, medicines, even recreational retreats. Intact ecosystems also help regulate our weather and climate. But these systems are extremely fragile, and we're only now beginning to understand the myriad interactions and interdependencies that sustain them. And we know that once they are gone, there are no replacements."¹ During this crisis, changing our approach and understanding the necessity to preserve these ecosystems are required even if the project demands implementation of drastic measures instantly for the sake of our sustenance. Though it is not easy, but thinking of our future, will be essential. "Eco-criticism is a response to the need for humanistic understanding of our relationships with the natural world in an age of environmental destruction."² Ecocriticism elaborates the intertwined position of the zoo/bio-centric world, women, and the 'discriminated others in the civilization'. It spurns anthropocentrism, criticizes subservient rationality and voices for eco-awareness. "Many perceptive minds have pointed out time and again that our thinking and perception have been determined by the material/corporeal environment rather than the natural. Our constructions of our environment and our lives have become so removed from the organic unity of the poetic and the spiritual and so how could we sense and see the elemental harmony. Ecocriticism is further an attempt to reintegrate the human and the non-human, to retrace the lost links between humanity and the world out there."³ "Ecocriticism is the study of literature and environment from an interdisciplinary point of view where all sciences come together to analyze the environment and brainstorm possible solutions for the correction of the contemporary environmental situation."⁴ "In the 1998 collection entitled, *Reading the Earth*, Michael P. Branch explains that "Ecocriticism is not just a means of analyzing Nature in literature but it broadens human conception of global community and advocates equally for cultural change by examining how the narrowness of culture's assumptions about the natural world has limited our ability to envision an ecologically sustainable human society."⁵ This paper concentrates upon an ecocritical reading of Gorden J.L. Ramel's poem "Mankind does not Agree" recently published in his Kindle collection of poems *The Human Disease*.

I have no use for birds in cages, but mankind does not agree;
they've been gaoling them for ages.
and they just don't seem to see
that the beauty that inspired, inevitably fades.⁶

This excerpt ecocritically hints at heinous human intrusion into the realms of Nature and their mindless ravaging of the bio-centric domain for the gratification of temporal obdurate pleasure. Such throttling of natural freedom of a living entity evinces human sadism and irrationality apart from man's ecocidal tendency of invading, capturing, taming and regulating the non-human entities/Nature as a mark of manifesting their power and reign, which they assume as their universal and undisputable right. The 'bird', here functions as a metaphorical representative of the marginalized and exploited nonhumans and subaltern others who are perennial victims of deplorable tyranny inflicted by eco-noxious civilization. It conveys how an organic life form in its encounter with the man-made terrain, eventually languishes and heads towards ruin. The "cage" here is a symbolic illustration of the man-made enclosure, barren, clumsy and cold, which instead of offering comfort to the bird, suffocates it, thereby proving itself to be rather a perilous baleful place enshrouding death or ruination. Moreover, such forceful imprisonment of an entity equates murderous depletion of eco-centric independence by the authoritarians. The anthropocentric concept of seeking solace and shelter is annulled here. Ecocritically, this suggests a failure of human inventions such as safe and indispensable sites of living. It equally construes that man has been corrupting and devastating the sanctity, harmony and serenity of the environment with his malignity. Malice, insensitivity, insensibility, and an unquenchable hunger of materialistic self-aggrandizement through vaunting their ownership of Nature's resources and of exquisite creation drive them eco-antagonistically eccentric. Consequently, man starts commoditizing, seizing, confining and mummifying the marvels of Nature instead of observing eco-amicable preservation. In their pursuit of anthropocentric arrogantaestheticism, which lacks ecological insight and foresightedness, they fail to comprehend the inevitability of decay, a natural phenomenon one cannot hold back or stop despite all efforts. It shows dearth of understanding/realization on part of human beings the fact that in the process, the sublime and animating brilliance of an eco-entity (bird) consequently suffers a premature withering due to its deracination from its natural habitat. Such an enterprise encouraging callous deprivation is ecologically detrimental and condemnable. Again, from an ecocritical dimension the fading away of the wondrous magnificence of the bird, a Nature's agent not only symbolizes Nature's protest against scornful ecocidal practices and hypocrisy in the name of Nature-fixation, but also establishes the reality that Time perishes everything in due course irrespective of human acceptance or disposal of the fact. The caging of the bird simultaneously manifests man's averting Nature. Such an act pictured in the poem confronts us with how consumerist approach and materialistic tenacity have paralyzed and blinded man to such an extent that human mind has been rejecting eco-oriented duties, eco-amicable demeanour and eco-centric religion as obscure, stagnant and fallacious factors against scientific proliferation which justifies and reinforces objective rationality.

Wings are made for flying,
for dancing with the air,
and wings that cannot open
are the colours of despair....

Here, the natural instincts and behaviour of the bird have been suppressed and manipulated; its existence has been jeopardized, and its organic valuableness has been annihilated by man against ecological principles. Such cataclysmic victimization of the bird becomes a grave cause behind its distress. It not only illustrates man's noncompliance with the eco-reality that the universe ceases to be decipherable and enrapturing with the proliferation of supremacy, imposition and assertion of right and possession but also emphasizes upon aesthetic distancing and providing space to every entity as an essential measure for rejuvenating the environment. The poem expresses that it is high time that all anthropocentric strategies should be superseded by conforming to diversity benevolently and selflessly. It also imparts a message that one should accept that world is not made only for man who can behave obstinately to the verge of scathing others; he should appreciate the environment around him sincerely by surmounting his mechanized self and prejudices instead.

...and what once was writ in diamonds
will in time be played in spades.

It epitomizes the ultimate dilapidation of the bounteous, plentiful and vibrant Nature into ashes beneath which mankind will get smothered and entombed as a gruesome aftermath of his vacuous indulgence in rapacious depredation of priceless natural resources, in hazardously polluting and desiccating our life-supporting hydrosphere, in devastation of our aerospace and in ruthless decimation of flora and fauna. These verses deliver

an ecocritical note that in a moment all mercenary gaudery and prosperity may crumble down and reduce to nothing, and all success and achievements that civilization boasts of are bound to prove inglorious.

and an anger in me rages
and I long to set them free,
but it's the sadness of the ages
that mankind does not agree.

The tone of the poet/speaker throughout the poem is eco-oriented. An eco-amiable individual's anger born of agitation and restlessness here is justified against consumerist culture of man. The stanza above attests an eco-friendly individual's protest and defiance against eco-adversary subjugation, insensitivity, irrationality, power and authority. Such an advocacy of biocentrism witnesses that the ecological wisdom exists somewhere, but is experienced rarely, as it remains inhumed under the detritus of cataclysmic philosophies. Thus, the poem righteously voices for the emancipation of and imparting justice to the nonhumans, the minorities, the underprivileged, the subaltern and the marginalized. It also views that not only their quandary and agony should be heard and felt distinctly by the progressive civilization but also ventures carried out to announce its competence at the expense of organic world should be stopped. The poem metaphorically laments the dehumanization of energies of instinct and feeling in man and that the integral inner world has become more tumultuous and rigid due to his alienation from Nature in his quest for worldly sapience. It proposes that incorporation of ecological ethics and principles into our anthropocentric system has become indispensable to revive our sense of equilibrium and concord. It simultaneously reads that only by adapting with heterogeneity veritably and compassionately, life can become substantial, or else, everything gets plagued and smashed beneath aggravating human ego.

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