



SRINIVASAN COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCE



(Affiliated to Bharathidasan University, Trichy)

PERAMBALUR – 621 212

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

Course: B.A., ENGLISH

Year: III

Semester: VI

Course Material on : COMMONWEALTH LITERATURE

Course code : Core Course – XIV (CC)

Sub. Code (BDU given) : 16ACCEN14

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Month & Year : MARCH 2020

COMMON WEALTH LITERATURE- 16ACCEN14

UNIT-1

1. THE SOLITARY WOODSMAN

- SIR CHARLES G.D ROBERTS

How does the poet describe fauna and flora in the poem, "THE SOLITARY WOODSMAN?"

Introduction

Sir Charles G.D Roberts, the popular Canadian poet has written many beautiful nature poems on Canadian environment. **The poem, "The Solitary Woodsman."** Is about **nature, the autumn season and a lonely forest man.** In the poem, the poet brings about the Canadian flora and fauna in an enchanting way. The autumn season in all its richness is described beautifully.

Flora in the landscape

It is autumn season. In that dark gloomy atmosphere, the chill wet wind is blowing around the solitary camp. In the grey lake the water is rushing beyond the alder bushes that are dripping snow. The wind makes the air fir-free move silently.

In that dark night, the yellow birches are twinkling and the cornal tress are laden with bunches of ripe fruits. The red maple tress makes a pomp show. The slim viburnum tress move freely in that dark marshy atmosphere.

As it is autumn season, the blueberries are dead but the small rowan trees are full of clusters of red flowers. Tall fern tress in the forest is used as bed by the shy bears. The green branches of the coniferous trees lay over the head of the woodsman who has returned to his camp and he makes his bed in the midst of these trees.

When the woodsman returns to his log hut at the close of the day, the red dry leaves fall on his roof. He sees patiently the falling leaves to which he will soon become a companion.

Fauna in the environment

In the forest in the dark damp wet soil, the moose in the thicket shines faintly like the scarlet lamp. Across the twilight, the owl sends a call to his mate who has fine soft feathers. The squirrels that have eaten nuts to their full, play, noisily through the red maple trees that make a grand show. The shy bear that has smooth shinning fur climbs up and sleeps there.

The woodsman, who once again comes to his log hut in the forest, wanders through the forest throughout the day in that wet soil. At the end of the day he makes his footsteps towards his hut. The squirrels that are playing hear his clam, serious footsteps but are unafraid and continue their playing.

When the woodsman is in his hut he hears the bluejay calling at his door. He also hears the wood mice running hurriedly up and down the rough log walls of his hut. The loon is thrilled at the end of the afternoon happily laughs. The calling of the moose is echoed. The lonely woods man hears all these sounds.

He also hears the continuous drumming sound made by the partridge and the humming of the hornet. All these faint sounds made by the various animals announce the coming of the winter.

Conclusion

The woods man is not lonely in the forest. He is at the peace in the midst of bright, beautiful flora and the happy playful fauna of the landscape. He has become with nature. The poet by his beautiful, graceful narration and description of the Canadian landscape, appeals to the senses of the readers and to them the poem is visual treat.

2. MY DAUGHTER'S BOY FRIEND

- RAZIA KHAN

Bring out the feelings of the mother expressed in the poem, "My Daughter's Boy friend."

Introduction

In the poem, "My Daughter's Boy Friend." The poetess describes the agony of a mother when she sees her daughter's love is shifting from her to her boy friend. The poem projects the life of the mother before and after the arrival of her daughter's boy friend and how it has changed her life.

Boy friend's arrival

The mother experiences strange happenings when she hears importunate knocks at the door. The pleading knocks on the door create a strange feeling in her mind that something bad will happen. The boy friend enters the house and unnoticed the mother's presence he goes straight like a blind man to his lady love. He ignores the presence of the mother and has no consideration for the pains that the mother took to bring up his lady love. He with his lady love drifts away into world of their own, where there is no place for the doting mother.

Mother's world

The mother's world revolves around the daughter. She is happy and at peace in the presence of her daughter. But she feels a threat to her happiness upon the arrival of her daughter's boyfriend. She was filled with pride when the child was in her womb. She gave birth to her daughter after undergoing labor pain. When her daughter fell sick, she spent sleepless nights. She showered love and affection on her daughter and took much pain and care to bring her up well. But now with the arrival of the daughter's boyfriend, all the pains that she underwent have become nothing. Her daughter, the flesh of her flesh, no longer belongs to her. This thought fills her heart with pain. The daughter also prefers the company of the boy friend to the company of her mother. This makes the mother feel a total omission from the life of her beloved daughter.

Mother's dreams

The mother has several dreams about her daughter which is like a fragrance that surrounds a beautiful flower. Just as a thoughtless hand that snatches the beautiful flower that has safely bloomed in the branches of the plant, her daughter's boyfriend has suddenly snatched away her daughter from her and shatters all her dreams about her daughter. She has never dreamt that she has to face such a thing one day.

Conclusion

The poem presents a typical sacrificing mother who dotes on her daughter. The mother is all caring and selfless. To her, her daughter was everything and she could not think beyond it. So, she could not bear when her daughter's love is shifted from her to her boyfriend. The mother is a bit possessive. She feels an emotional vacuum in her, when her daughter entertains the company of her boyfriend.

UNIT- II

3. HOUSE AND LAND

- ALLEN CURNOW

Bring out the message conveyed by Allen Curnow in his poem, “HOUSE AND LAND.”

Introduction

Allen Curnow’s poem, “House and Land.” Is taken from ‘Island and Time’ published in 1941. It is one of the most frequently anthologized poems. The spirit of exile is one of the predominant themes in Allen Curnow’s poetry. The poem, ‘House and Land’ investigates the sense of alienation experienced by the settlers even though they have two generations in the adopted land. The settlers are unable to cut themselves from their ancestral roots. They are not genuinely attached to Newzealand, their adopted country.

Old Miss. Wilson and her homestead

The poem revolves round old Miss. Wilson in Newzealand. Her father had moved to Newzealand from England and owned a vast stretch of land. Her parents are no more. She is eighty years old. She lives in a big house with all the amenities and is leading a luxurious life. But she finds herself with a void. She is proud to of her ancestral heritage and lives on with the memories of her rich English legacy. She is incorrigibly obsessed with the past and future seems to hold no redemption.

The Historian

A historian visits Newzealand for a research on the settlers. Before meeting Miss. Wilson, he meets the cowman and tries to collect some preliminary details about the family. He finds the place dull and uninteresting. He sees a dog tied up. It keeps on moving within its limited space. Old Miss. Wilson displays her ancestral lineage proudly to the Historian and she states that Historian in fact resembled one of them. From her talk the Historian understands her protective attitude towards her past.

The Cowman

Though the cowman has been working in Miss. Wilson's family for a longtime, he does not know anything about the family. This shows his lack of attachment. He is not interested in continuing his service in the family as he is unsure of how long the old lady will survive and decides to the place, the next winter, to make better living. He leaves the house because it is "bloody quiet."

The Dog

The dog is tied up. It could move only within the limited space. It seems to be brooding and wasting it. It lazily strolls from privy to fowl- to privy. It senses the innate stagnation and a state of decay. When it rains, the dog retires to its barrel where it remains "loop and lame."

The Message

In the poem, the poet emphasizes the theme of displacement. Though the settlers displaced from England to Newzealand, they fail to recognize Newzealand as their homeland. They live in the adopted land without being adapting themselves to the circumstances. The poet feels that unless these people change their attitude, their life will remain miserable. The poet hopes that the new generation will change. He presents it symbolically through the rain. The rain symbolizes fertility and redemption. As Miss. Wilson has no one to carry on her legacy, with her end, the old connections will also come to an end.

Conclusion

The poet expresses his opinion through the Historian. His voice is loud and clear. The settlers must move on and should not cling to their past. Having adopted the country, they have to adapt themselves accordingly. Things cannot change but hope is there to be pursued.

4. THE DYING EAGLE

- E.J. PRATT

Bring out the message conveyed by the in the poem, "THE DYING EAGLE."

Introduction

Edwin John Pratt, one of the leading personalities from Canada, was a master of lyric and narrative verse. 'The Dying Eagle' is one of his best known narrative poems. The poem deals with a simple message that change is inevitable.

The aged eagle

An aged eagle was the undisputed monarch of his realm. He ruled its territory from the mountain. From forests, to mountains to sky, every inch of it belonged to him. His empire had no boundaries. He had defeated and outlived all his rivals. His domination was evident through the number of his offspring. Almost all the eagles that were flying in and around his kingdom were his offspring. These young birds took their first lessons of flight from their nest in front of the old eagle.

Entry of the new bird

One morning, the old eagle's eyes noticed a new bird in his territory. The new entrant was flying across freely. The eagle who saw this decided to have a look at it closely. So, he flew majestically and reached a position from where he could have a good look at the bird. When he looked at the new bird closely, he was dumb founded. He was confused whether it was a partridge or a falcon or a heron or an eagle. In his life he had never seen such a bird.

New bird's flight

The intruder was not scared about to fly across the eagle's territory even though it knew that it had invaded it. In the broad day light, it dared to make its presence felt. The new bird flew in such a way that it gave an appearance of a dragon flying across the sky. The old eagle had never seen any bird flying in that way in his territory.

The intruder's behavior

The new bird was physically strong and was so courageous that it had made the old eagle to stop and make notice of it. The eagle found the new bird's agility better than him. The new bird had cool approach and it showed no regards or consideration

for the king of the territory. Thus after snubbing the old eagle, the new bird disappeared from the place. The old eagle was humiliated.

Change in the eagle

As pride of the old eagle was shaken on that day by the rude behaviour of the intruder, a change came over the old monarch. The change was visible. His eyes had lost their usual charm. His feathers appeared dull and his wings were lowered down. His head was hidden with shame. He looked like a bird drenched in rain. His behaviour showed that it was finally defeated. He became weak and was brooding over his lost empire.

Message

The poet conveys the message through the old eagle. Change is the only thing that cannot be changed. Change is inevitable. So everyone should be prepared to accept the change. It is nature's law that old should be replaced by young and new. The old was badly shocked because it never expected a change in its life. Everybody has their time and when it comes for them to leave, they should leave without complaining. Old should give way to the new.

Conclusion

The eagle came to know that its time was over. The moment of realization was painful but it was inevitable as life keeps on moving without stopping for anyone.

UNIT- III

PROSE

5. NATURE AS MONSTER.

- MARGARET ATWOOD

Describe the four positions stated by Margaret Atwood in, 'NATURE AS MONSTER.'

Introduction

'Survival' is Margaret Atwood's principal of literary criticism. Atwood postulates that Canadian literature by extension, Canadian identity is characterized by the symbol of survival, to Atwood; the central image of Canadian literature is equivalent to the image of island in British literature and the frontier in American literature, is the notion of survival and its central character, the victim.

Symbol of survival

The symbol of survival is expressed in the omnipresent use of victim position in Canadian literature. These positions represent a scale of self-consciousness to self-actualization for the victim in the victor/victim relationship.

The victor in these scenarios may be other human, nature, the wilderness or other external or internal factors which oppress the victim.

The central image of the victim is not static. According to Atwood, four positions are possible and visible in Canadian literature. These positions are outlined below.

Position One

To deny the fact that you are the victim. In this position the members of the victim group will deny their identity as victims accusing those members of the group who are less fortunate of being responsible for their own victimhood.

In position one; the Canadian writers are pretending that Nature is the all-good Divine Mother when they are being eaten by mosquitoes and falling into bogs. But this cannot continue long against the Canadian climate and the Canadian stretch of the land which when compared with Wordsworth's Lake District is merely a small lukewarm pimple. Most of Canadian Nature poetry in nineteenth century is in position one.

Position Two

To acknowledge the fact that you are a victim (but attribute it to a powerful force beyond human control such as fate, history God or biology). In this position victims are likely to resign themselves to their fate.

In this position two there are several variations. Acknowledging the truth of your situation is always preferable to hiding it. The Canadian poems in position two talk about the hardness of the land and the difficulties in coming to terms with it. In position two there is feeling that nature is a huge powerful hostile enemy against whom man will turn into the will to lose. This attitude becomes an obstacle to survival.

Position Three

To acknowledge the fact that you are a victim but refuse to accept the assumption that the role is inevitable. This is dynamic position in which the victim differentiates the role of victim and the experience of the victim.

In position three, instead of giant Nature beating up weak helpless man, the giant man is beating up weak helpless nature. There is a much chance to play victim if you then identify with nature and see the plight as inescapable.

Position Four

To be a creative non- victim. A position for ex-victims when creativity of all kinds is fully possible.

In position four, Man himself is seen as part of the process. Man does not define himself as good or weak as against a hostile nature or as bad or bad or aggressive as against a passive powerless Nature. He accepts his own body including its sexuality as part of this process and he is free to move within space rather than in a self- created tank against it. Though such moments are few in Canadian poetry, they do exist. They occur in the social poems of Irving Layton.

Conclusion

According to Atwood's theories in works such as 'Survival' she considers Canadian literature as the expression of Canadian identity. According to this literature Canadian identity has been defined by a fear of nature, by settler history and by unquestioned adherence to community.

UNIT-IV

DRAMA

THE ROAD

WOLE SOYINKA

Attempt a critical appreciation of the play, 'The Road' by Soyinka.

Introduction

Wole Soyinka, the Nigerian playwright, poet and essayist is a recipient of Nobel Prize in literature. His play, 'The Road', was awarded the grand prix. The play portrays Professor, the protagonist searching for the word or logos.

Structure

The play consists of two parts with a series of five major mimes in which one of the characters is in a state of possession. In the opening mime, Samson, the driver mate of Kotonu, sits on Professor's chair, placed on top of a table in presence of Salubi, a would be driver and pretends to be an African Millionaire, flinging bribes to a line of police. Their hilarious fantasy is disrupted by Professor returning from a village vigil. The frightened, Samson continues his imposing act and confuses Professor, who thinks that he was found a kindred spirit. The irony is that they are antithetical

spirits. By virtue of his willingness to accept fate as it comes, Samson appears to have greater affinity for the word on bits of newspaper instead of within the self.

In a subsequent scene Samson intimates professor in his former church going days and his dual with the bishop. Each of the three remaining imitations, possession scenes, involve death and professor is the prophet of death. Soyinka uses the chorus to recreate the original atmosphere of the scenes intimated as with organ music in the blowing scene and the lay bouts 'dirging in the subsequent scenes. At the end of the first part of the play, Murano mistakes requiem for the departed souls of the bridge accident for the evensong that usually summons him to serve the palm wine "communion". This simple confusion of time illustrates munaro's non-temporal condition.

Part two

Part two opens with Samson and Kotonu reenacting the bridge, an overcrowded truck passes them and plunges through the rotten planks of the bridge. Although Professor sees the accident as a sacrifice to a thirsty river goddess, he considers it largely wasted. Professor criticizes the accident, as he does the layabouts for fighting at political rallies for money because in both the cases death lacks the dedication to the understanding he considers for redemption. Ironically while the Professor imitates his followers into the cult of the word, the process of redemption seems to occur without him during the scene of possession. The cathartic reenactments in the play are dramatizations of cultural transcendence.

Possession scenes

Samson also undergoes possessions by the dead, precipitated by the policeman, particular Joe gropes around the back of the store truck with his hands and is about to discover the mask when Samson distracts him by putting on the uniform of Sergeant Burma, the former Aksident store manager, who was recently killed in a road accident himself. Samson then imitates Sergeant Burma, while the layabouts sing a dirge. Reenactment thus takes Kotonu and Samson towards the word's boundlessness, melting their identities with the fate of the dead men terrifying them into hysterically ripping off the mask and uniform.

End of the play

Finally Munaro's reenactment occurs at the evening "communion" when he is forced by professor to wear the mask. Murano dances to the rhythm of agemo in the ritual of Egungun, as he died as the masquerader before his death. In the previous reenactments only the possessed were frightened, now everyone is frightened except professor of an impending death.

Conclusion

Even though the world is manifested through possession, professor is never really possessed. His vicarious attempt to penetrate the mystery of death culminates with apparently no spiritual rebirth, but in his own accidental death at the end by say Tokyokid, the skeptical ringleader of the layouts.

Bring out Soyinka's views on transcendence.

Introduction

Soyinka's condensation of time and space began with the play of 'A Dance of the Forest' and the periodic flashbacks of the strong breed' and reaches its greatest originality in 'The road'.

Possession

The characters of the play revive the past through an intensity of recall that dissolves the boundaries of time and personally allows them to dramatize their mental images instantaneously. Soyinka's paradigm is the communication between the word and the masquerader at the moment of his possession by the spirit for whom he is dancing. The difference between Murano's possession by Ogun and the possession of the other characters by the past incidents that they relive is one of intensity and depth. Murano transcends into the pure energy of the word at the source of thought, while the others dive to deeper levels of thought that are purified in the process of being dramatized.

Transcendence

In his essay, 'The Fourth Stage', Soyinka explains that in addition to the three worlds commonly recognized in African metaphysics - those of the unborn, the living and the ancestors, there is also a less understood fourth space, "the dark continuum of transition, where occurs the inter-transmutation of essence ideal and materiality. The characters of 'the road' enter this transitional space while being possessed on reenacting events from the past. In this experience of transcending the boundaries of space, time and causality, the characters momentarily cross over the gulf between the human and the divine, the finite and the infinite, in their transition towards an experience of primal reality. Making this highly subjective experience accessible to the audience is Soyinka's dramaturgical skill.

The word

Soyinka symbolizes this experience with the enigmatic word. Ultimately the word represents the unity of name and form, sound and meaning that is found in

the fourth space. The approach towards the word that occurs in the play's reenactments is accompanied by the chorus which recreates not only the original atmosphere of ritual transition across the abyss. Sound therefore functions as an important transitional device, although the sound of the word is never actually manifested and its meaning cannot be discovered on the printed page.

The road

Another transitional device is road itself. Soyinka uses it as a middle ground, a no man's land, full of corruption and impending death. Similarly Professor's Victorian outfit, his threadbare top hat and tails, represent a middle state belonging neither to European nor to African culture.

Conclusion

Thus the play, 'The Road', teaches that the word's ultimate meaning exist beyond the range of ordinary waking consciousness and requires a transition toward higher states of which the playwright provides a glimpse.

Unit -V

FICTION

THINGS FALL APART

- CHINUA ACHEBE

Bring out the significance of the title '**Things Fall Apart.**'

Introduction

The title for Achebe's novel comes from Butter Yeasts' poem, 'The Second Coming'. The poem is highly symbolic and it speaks of the "Old" order and its displacement by a "New" order that kicks up mixed feelings of revulsion and fascination.

Achebe's perspectives

Achebe's novel, "Things Fall Apart", is also about a forcible break up of an older and settled order. Achebe is not so much taken up with the new order. He is preoccupied with the break - down of the "Old" order under the relentless onslaught of the "new" order. He patiently and lovingly reinvents and flushes out the "Old" order

under the relentless onslaught of the “new” order. He patiently and lovingly reinvents and flushes out the “old” order.

Reasons for the break off the old order

The novelist dispassionately presents how things are beginning “to fall apart” in the Igbo society even before the arrival of the Whiteman. The White culture cannot be blamed of the crime of destroying the indigenous culture of the Igbo. He points out that the Igbo culture is quite flexible and presumably would have resolved its own contradictions in its own way without the invention of the Europeans. Thus Achebe’s novel, ‘Things Fall Apart’ envelopes twin tragedies - one occurs in the life of the protagonist, Okonkwo, and the other takes place on a broader plane at the level of the society of Okonkwo.

Though the people in Okonkwo’s society had a common culture, they did not agree on its various aspects. Several times the novel tells us about how social customs and values had been falling apart as a result of developments within the society itself. The African societies were not static and the tradition was not followed by everyone without opposition. The novel shows that these societies had internal tensions and dynamism which made them change and develop.

Disintegration on the individual and the social level

Disintegration of Igbo society is central to the novel. The idea of collapse on both individual and social level is one of the novel’s central images. This image gives the novel its title. The Christians arrive and bring diversions to the Igbo. One of their first victims is Okonkwo’s family. The new faith divides father from son. The Christians tried to attack the very heart of Igbo belief and the core of Igbo culture as the tribe’s religious beliefs are absolutely integral to all other aspects of life. The first converts tried to make a profit from the change in the social order. As they had no titles in the tribe, they had nothing to lose.

Kinship bonds weakened

The arrival of the white colonists and their religion weakened the kinship bonds, so central to Igbo religion. The conversion to Christianity involved a partial rejection of the Igbo structure kinship. The Christian involved a partial rejection of the Igbo structure kinship. The Christian church that recognized Igbo kinship bonds as the central obstacle to its success, replaced it with a metaphorical kinship structure through god saying that they are all brothers and sons of god.

Portrayal of colonialism

The novel is not one-sided in its portrayal of colonialism. It presents the economic benefits of cross-cultural contact and reveals the villagers' delight in the hospitals' treatment of illness. Mr. Brown urged the Igbo to send their children to school because he knew that the colonial government would rob the self government, if they did not know the language. He urged them to adapt so that they would not lose all autonomy. But at the same time colonialism cannot be viewed in positive light. The colonial government punished the individuals according to European culture and religious values. For example without trying to understand the cultural and religious tradition behind the practice, the government pronounced the abandonment of new born twins a punishable crime.

Conclusion

The novelist does not present a clear-cut dichotomy of the white religion as evil and the Igbo religion as a good. His portrait of Christians is as fair and balanced as his portrait of the Igbo. The Christians filled void in clan life. They did good by rescuing the twins and providing comfort to outcasts. But the Christians are the first wave of imperialism. The missionaries' arrival is the precursor to subjugation.

