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Journal of Development Economics and Management Research Studies (JDMS)
A Peer Reviewed Open Access International Journal
ISSN: 2582 5119 (Online)



Crossref Prefix No: 10.53422
10(15), 46-49, January-March, 2023
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Sustainability and New World Order- A Study With Reference to Kamala Das' 'My Grandmother's House and A.D.Hope's ' The Death of the Bird'

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Abstract

The paper tries to emulate sustainability through two poems – Kamala Das' My grandmother's house and A.D.Hope's The Death of the bird. In My Grandmother's House the narrator is dislocated from her maternal home in Kerala to her in laws place in Bombay, whereas the bird in the ' The Death of the Bird' is feeling uprooted in the alienated soil Australia. The poems though belonging to different nations puts forth the idea that when there is liberation from economic impoverishment, there will be environmental and social reconstruction. The sustainability which is attained through perseverance should be bequeathed to the future generation by creating a new social structure considering environment as a primary factor. The two poems written during the late 1950's depict the transformation of the world into a novel phenomenon which wasn't witnessed in the last 2000 years. The social structure which chained man in the name of convention, geographical boundaries, customs and beliefs passed on to them from the old world started to attenuate, paving way for independence of man as an individual rather a socially manacled entity.

Key words- Sustainability- dislocation- alienation- search for true love- economic liberation- breaking social ties- creating new world order.

Introduction

I am the only one. I cannot do everything, but I can do something. And I will not let what I cannot do interfere with what I can do. Edward Everett Hale.

Sustainability can be defined as the factor which focuses on meeting the needs of the present

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without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. The concept of sustainability is composed of three pillars namely: economic, environmental and social- also known as profits, planet and people.

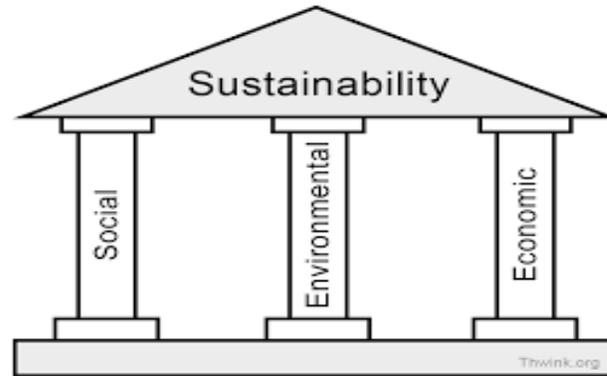


Fig1.1 The Three Pillars of Sustainability

The paper tries to emulate sustainability through two poems – Kamala Das' My grandmother's house and A.D.Hope's The Death of the bird. In My Grandmother's House the narrator is dislocated from her maternal home in Kerala to her in- laws place in Bombay, whereas the bird in the ' The Death of the Bird' is feeling uprooted in the alienated soil Australia. The poems though belonging to different nations puts forth the idea that when there is liberation from economic impoverishment, there will be economic and social reconstruction. During such drastic transformation, the attained sustainability should be bequeathed to the future generation by creating a new social structure considering environment as a primary factor. The two poems written during the late 1950's depict the transformation of the world into a novel phenomenon which wasn't witnessed throughout history. The social structure which chained man in the name of convention, geographical boundaries, customs and beliefs passed on to them from the old world started to attenuate, paving way for independence of man as an individual rather as a socially manacled entity.

In The Grandmother's House one could visualize the poet's nostalgia. She is reminiscing her grandmother's house where she spent her childhood with her grandmother. Her grandmother was very affectionate towards Kamala Das and she was emotionally attached to her. The house which she adored and felt proud about turned uninhabited after her grandmother's death.

...That woman died,
The house withdrew into silence, snakes moved
Among books...

The darkness of her grandmother's house has no terrifying impact on her. She tends it in its dilapidated state as she did it in the past- when the house was in full vigor. She longs to go there and to peep through the dust ridden blinds of the window to listen to the frozen air. The poet is found to be caught between her past and present. Even the death of the grandmother, silence of the house, ruined books of the past are soothing. On the other hand, the present condition at her in-laws' house is so tormenting that the once proud woman begins to imagine her as a 'brooding Dog' behind her own bedroom door begging for her husband's love. She expresses her numbness through the lines ' my blood turned cold like the moon '. The moon being the emblem of love should have filled her with love and warmth; rather it has made her cold because of her husband's loveless, respect-less attitude towards her.

The poet in order to sustain in her present thinks of carrying a handful of darkness from her grandmother's house.

...I who have lost
my way and beg now at strangers' doors to
Receive love, at least in small change?

In her attempt to search a true and selfless love she chooses to go beyond the social ties indulging in extra-marital affair. She was once supplied with true love from her grandmother hence didn't compromise her life when she was denied the same by her husband. She was independent enough that she didn't settle for anything less. Kamala Das' life seems to have been deserted like a desert into which she affords to bring in love and makes her life an oasis. She didn't tie her down to the social beliefs but framed a new one for her. This kind of social re-framing could be witnessed only when there is economic autonomy available to an individual. The privilege of building up a new life in a culturally intense country like India was available only to a handful of the elite sect of the society like Kamala Das. In the 1990's after the introduction of LPG- Liberalization, Globalization and Privatization money started flowing in the hands of the middle-class people- the major population of the county-started constructing a new order to live, breaking the beliefs of the society which curtailed their freedom to a larger extent.

Similarly, in A.D. Hope's *The Death of the Bird* too we could witness the back-and-forth oscillating love for the present home-Australia and the mother home-Britain. In this poetry Hope covers a larger domain where the bird is not any bird in particular but every bird that is the estranged Englishmen in Australia. Hope feminizes' by addressing the bird as 'she'. This poem too speaks about the inner life of the personified - The passion to live drives the bird to dislocate from its migrated home to its native home. Hope begins the poem with the line ' For every bird there is this last migration-meaning that birds migrate season after season. The bird aspires to fly to the summer station and is guided by a speck on the map year after year. Being home she straws her nest, feed her brood and carries out her mundane activities, simultaneously mourning for the exiled love.

The homeland which she feels proud about becomes a passion day by day as the whisper of love grows stronger as it's commonly seen in migrants. Likewise, the settlers in Australia were forced to consider the new land their home, though they are physically and emotionally drawn towards their ancestral home. 'Going away she is also coming home' – the Australians go away from Australia to England only to come home and vice versa. It implies that they are emotionally torn between both the homes. So the memories- parents, love, children - of the other home make them restless. The land to which the bird wants to travel looks like mirage of valleys with palm trees casting shadows, cool air from moor land and scraps of stone.

Single and frail, uncertain of her place,
alone in the bright host of her companions,
Lost in the blue unfriendliness of space.

The lack of true love resulting in loneliness makes it commence the journey once again in the inane unfriendly blue space in spite of the bird being very weak and fragile. In their attempt to pacify the burning desire to reach the summer station the bird uses its ultimate strength. The bird is small, insignificant, and weak. On her last migration, she loses her sense of where to go and how to get there. She tries to continue, but the way is no longer clear to her and the landscape seems suddenly foreign.

She flies in darkness, tossed about by uncaring winds, until finally, inevitably, she dies.

The invisible thread is broken as she flies;
Suddenly, without warning, without reason,
The guiding spark of instinct winks and dies.

The invisible thread which connects them to their native land gets broken as they have to cross the vast geographical territories. The once friendly atmosphere- the sky, wind, light- has become unfriendly and indifferent ultimately leading to death. The death here does not signify a literal death but their willingness to disconnect them from their home land as well the problems in the settled land. They move forward realizing the eastern valleys which once seemed luminous is actually a cursed darkness that fell upon them. They have traveled to their present from their past yet conscious of losing their sense of belonging to the place of identity. It is only their memories that go front and back as a vent to their generation's frustration. Whereas, their willingness for sustainability led them create a new identity in the modern brave new world.

The two poems discussed in this article are filled with a sense of doubt, homelessness, going back and forth in thoughts, dispossession, search for lost home, exiled existence in the present, inability to settle in the new home yet there is a sense of shackling away from the social stigmas and create a new social order. The two protagonists crave for their past not because they missed it but because of the problems they face in their present lives. The acceptance of the present was possible for both as they carried forward their life according their strong will and determination. At any stage they did not want to escape from their reality but they willingly underwent the process of losing their socially conditioned identity.

They were able to overcome the social oppression not by brooding over the past but by ruminating their pains and through it bringing back their lost emotional balance. The problem of dispossession, dislocation and alienation evades once a particular individual or a community is able to attain through economic empowerment. As the economy grows the sense of belonging towards nativity vanishes gradually leading to the formation of global village where man is able to free himself from the cultural and social construct. This in turn results in re-structuring of society and develops cross border ethnicity. Thereby the research study concludes that an economically independent man or a woman is able to liberate themselves from the taboos of the society and as a mass form the new world order. At this juncture one should also remember that 'balance the earth with the economy' alone is not be taken into consideration as this ideology might lead to the over exploitation of the planet. The hope for future arises not only with economic and social sustainability but also with environmental sustainability.

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