

ECHOING NATURE’S HAVOC IN BARBARA KINGSOLVER’S *PRODIGAL SUMMER*

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Abstract

Barbara Kingsolver is called an eco-friendly writer and her extensive education in biology is witnessed in her book *Prodigal Summer*. The plot is based on the ecological perspective and biological facts, weaving together three stories of human life. As a nature lover, her works mostly concentrates on the social and environmental problems of the world. She highlights how nature is destroyed by humans and how the nature retaliates it through natural calamities. This paper tends to study the situation how the protagonist’s emphasis the significance of the organic foods which is devoid of pesticides.

Key words: Nature, Pesticides, Organic Products, Animals and Deforestation

Kingsolver is a contemporary American author, freelance journalist and political activist. Her works concentrates on the current social issues such as the environment, human rights and social injustice. Her female protagonists are chosen carefully and represent the day to day struggle they face in the American society. Her personal experiences and passions is deeply influenced in her writing is clearly expressed in her novels. From an early age, Kingsolver enjoyed telling stories and her parents would listen patiently to her wonderful bedtime stories. She has a very Deep insight towards nature so maintained a small vegetable garden. She is also fascinated by animals; her parents understood her very well and allowed her to get connection with animals except snake and mice. These two creatures were not allowed to enter inside her home by her parents. As her father is a medical practitioner, he moved to Central Africa with his family to serve the Africans.

While living in Africa, Kingsolver experienced how the so-called minority people suffered under various social constraints. Kingsolver’s writing has received much acclaim, including the American Library Award. She continues her role as an environmental activist and human rights advocate. She used her writing career as a tool for spreading her political and social message. *Prodigal Summer* is Kingsolver’s fifth novel published in the year 2000. This novel adroitly reveals her childhood experiences and current home in Appalachia. It is set in the fictional Zebulon County and it is the story of the natural world and its gradual progress over one fertile and flowering summer. There are three interesting stories which express how the nature is destroyed by human beings.

The major character in the first story is Deanna Wolfe, a ranger in the Zebulon National Forest has a passion for Coyote. She spent her most of the time in protecting Coyote from Eddie Bondo. Bondo is the son of a sheep farmer from Wyoming, who is ready to kill the animal for the sake of his sheep. Coyotes are wolf like wild dogs in North America. It is an endangered species and is a prominent character in Native American folklore, mainly in the South Western United States and Mexico. The hunting of Coyotes for their fur generates income. At present they are raised as pups and the hybrid animal are playful and loyal to their owners, but are suspicious and shy of strangers. It is a great wild animal but humans have changed its nature and domesticated it to suit their selfish purposes.

In the second story the prominent character is named Lusa Maluf Landowski, twenty-eight-year-old girl. She moved to Zebulon County after her marriage with Cole Widener.

Cole and Lusa often had an argument in managing their farm without pesticides, beneath the bitterness the couple still care for each other. Cole died in an accident and Lusa inherited the farm and struggled hard to maintain it. With the help of her teenage nephew, Little Rickie and Garnett Walker she sold goat meat and earned her livelihood.

The third story centers on the character Garnett Walker, he had an American chestnut tree and believed that the tree brought him his fortune. After blight destroyed the tree, the family members lost their wealth. So he tried to resurrect the

American chestnut by crossbreeding with the Chinese chestnut. He deeply misses his wife Ellen who died of lung disease. Though he misses his wife too much his mind is often occupied with the thoughts of his neighbor Nannie Rawley. She is in her seventies and inherited her family's apple orchard and maintained it with organic manures and never used pesticides.

Kingsolver vividly gives the description of nature and make the audience stay connected with nature. Morning vibes in the words of her is as follows, The day was gorgeous. This was summer, surely. These morning chills would soon be gone for good, dissolved into the heat of breeding season. She inhaled: even the air smelled like sexual ecstasy. Moses and ferns were releasing their spores into the air.

Birds were pressing the unfeathered brood patches on their breasts against fertile eggs; coyote pups, wherever on earth they lived, were emerging for their first lessons in life. (P S 183,184) The major themes in *Prodigal Summer* are nature, love, marriage, family and companionship. In all the three stories the humans are interconnected with nature is clearly expressed. There is also an emphasis in protecting nature and maintaining a healthy relationship with nature to stay healthy without the usage of pesticides in food items. The constant conflict between nature and the humans is a recurrent process as humans have taken away most of the natural resources. Humans are more materialistic in their behaviour and attitude so they failed to understand the importance of the nature. Nature on the other hand silently undergoes human tortures and later reacts through natural calamities. Kingsolver in her interview with Stephen Fisher says that, Certainly, an appreciation for nature is an important feature of my work, and it arose in part because I grew up running wild in the woods with little adult supervision and I studied biology as a college student and then went to graduate school in biology. I am one of thousands of species that live in this place, and I don't ever forget the other ones are there. Species diversity is a biological fact. I think a lot about the world out there beyond the artifice that human beings have created (Fisher 27).

Kingsolver presents the destruction of nature in various ways. She suggests that nature is to be preserved and that is the universal responsibility of the human and non – human world to nurture, replenish, rejuvenate and revise planet earth. Thus, the interconnectedness of nature and humans is highlighted and the Nature can survive without the help of humans but Humans cannot. The significance of protecting ecology and controlling deforestation is emphasized in Kingsolver's novels. At this present scenario many people consume junk foods that lead to ill health. Even the normal vegetables and fruits are poisoned by using pesticides as some people are profit oriented. Kingsolver through *Prodigal Summer* tries to create awareness among the readers about organic farming and its goodness.

Work Cited:

1. Kingsolver, Barbara. *Prodigal Summer*. Quality Paperbacks Direct, 2000
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