

Rachel Carson's Critique of Pesticide Use: A Study of the Environmental and Human Health Dangers.

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Abstract

Rachel Carson is a brilliant writer who amalgamates Science and Humanities together and posits an interchangeable meaning to spotlight the point where the study of environmentalism begins. The paper is an attempt to interlock her literary work and activism against industrial complexes. It is committed in the backdrop of dramatic deterioration of human health, loss of birds and others creatures migrations and loss. She remains a strong environmentalist and activist and critiques of the use of synthetic pesticides in her seminal book *Silent Spring*. The paper will come out with some narratives, fables and data from the text centralising how then indiscriminate use of Aldehyde, DDT and other chemicals are affecting human and physical environment. Carson appears as an activist not only protesting against capitalist and industrialists but also her beautiful depiction of thoughts and awareness on the harm engulfing beneficial insects, birds, aquatic life, and ultimately accumulate in human bodies, causing long-term toxic effects including suspected carcinogenicity. It was exposed that we cannot control environment without bringing loss and repercussion. As an environmentalist Carson instructs that we need to protest and fight for balance in nature, we need to unite against use of pesticides that disrupts our ecosystem and so does the our family structure. The paper delves into a key thought that it is an invisible force destroying nature and our health, there must be a policy making effort to prevent hazards created by pesticides. This abstract encapsulates Carson's scientific findings and activist message on the dangers of pesticides to both nature and people.

Keywords: Ecosystem, Pesticide, Poison, Environment Pollution, Carcinogens

Introduction

It was the best of the time and it was the worst of time, the age refers to the mid twentieth Century when our social system deeply connected to Science and Technology with affirm faith for human facilities. In this period, Science and technology facilitated to the

human society chemicals with the optimism that the application of chemicals such as pesticides, DDT and other chemicals will increase the productivity of crops and agriculture. In the hope of such an output, The chemical industries manufactured and produced the larger productions by supported and promoted by the State for the reason that it would better bring solutions to food crisis and the State could be free from bear responsibility to care people especially during plagues, droughts and flood break out and an immense loss. Such optimism is questioned by Marine Scientist who beautifully portrays the other side of the application of chemicals in agricultural feed, residential areas and forests. She has given literary and figurative descriptions of hidden dangers of these chemicals.

She boldly narrates the uncertain dangers mixed with chemicals are destroying lives of human and physical environments. She critiques the United States in indulgence and in an equal participation for gaining popularity in the production of chemical pesticides for controlling insects and increasing agricultural yields without a long term testing of such pesticides and without knowing ecological consequences. She also critiques the unquestioning acceptance of chemical sprays agricultural productions. Being a social activist and scientist, her mediation in such a beautiful social, cultural and scientific movement bring an environmental awareness and cautionary measure of health from the pesticides uses because human health and environmental well being are interconnected. Carson scientifically notes that the application of pesticides bring harm to children, animals, birds and insects and they succumb to either fatal disease and death.

Critical Analysis

The book, *Silent Spring* published in 1962 begins its preamble, “Introductory Chapter-A Fable for Tomorrow” in which she highlights hazards, ecological disturbances and literary presentation of unseen dangers and disease produced due to the applications of chemical pesticides and aerial spray on agricultural, vegetation and forests. She writes:

There was once a town in the heart of America where all life seemed to live in harmony with its surroundings. The town lay in the midst of a checkerboard of prosperous farms, with fields of grain and hillsides of orchards where, in spring, white clouds of bloom drifted above the green fields. In autumn, oak and maple and birch set up a blaze of color that flamed and flickered across a backdrop of pines. Then foxes barked in the hills and deer silently crossed the fields, half hidden in the mists of the fall mornings. (*Silent Spring* 10)

Here she defines a country with a deep amalgamation of human being and physical environment. The book absolutely revolutionised environmentalist discourse for portraying a place in other corner of the world, human beings, animals and birds can live together. The above paragraph remains instrumental in the form of poetic environmental awareness to the readers which carries a deep symbolic and the thematic message to the people are unable to think about the repercussion of chemical fallouts and pesticides. She creates a pastoral imagery and an idealised setting complementing an ecological balance between human

beings and physical environment for a peaceful American town that is also symbolic to a town exists in the corner of the world. She notes “all life seemed to live in harmony with its surroundings.” She uses a phrase for an ecological balance and the possible notion that all have equal rights for coexistence. But such notion is tarnished and colonised by chemical industries complex by complementing facilities and benefits provided by them.

She depicts an ideal town with beautiful images of pastoral land which is rich with “prosperous farms,” “fields of grain,” and “hillsides of orchards” in which she gives message that such town is created, there is no dearth of abundance of food and crops, fertility and stability. These phrases or the use of the poetics refer to and the poetic philosophy and purpose of human cause given by William Wordsworth who underscores “Return to Nature” makes us believe that “O there is blessing in this gentle breeze,/ A visitant that while it fans my cheek/Doth seem half-conscious of the joy it brings/From the green fields, and from yon azure sky.” (*The Prelude* 10). Wordsworth gives the similar message in his poetic production on the abundance of fertile Nature, the best companion to human beings. Nature itself embodies a healing, productive and a complete enjoying freedom which is may underscored as the real assumption of life. She uses imagery such as “white clouds of bloom” that inculcates the authorial imagination of pastoral setting which appeals human beings to dwell with such specific ecological zones. Thereby she uses a couple of words that mark natural images and intensify the beauty of the language such as the description of autumn in the words “oak and maple and birch set up a blaze of color” creates a visual image and photogenic landscape sufficing its seasonal movement surrounded by flora and fauna. Here, the words like “blaze,” “flamed,” and “flickered” mark movement and vitality of Nature in its own ecosystem and appear to be never ending. The central idea underscore the meaning that Rachel Carson frames Nature as dynamic and alive force.

Carson’s story is not just an information of environmental awareness but she carries a perfect artistic skill in the use of images through her words. She treats her images which turn its own situation to the theme of the text, at a consequence, the purpose and form of literature remains effective and eye catching to the readers. The purpose of employing sensory and visual imagery is that the readers can feel and visualise colours of springs and autumn. In the above quotes she employs the following phrases “foxes bark in the hills,” and see “deer silently cross the fields.” She portrays a perfect example of Nature mentioning some animals and natural images through which the purpose yields up our pastoral landscape with all settings of flora and fauna. The mentioned animals voices are not alienated from us, they are known, sometimes interact with animals loves. She critiques that we are making gap and creating animosity due to a couple events broadcasted by government sponsored agencies over the attack of animals on human beings. The reasons of attack are not mentioned. We also don’t think that we also hunt animals for our food. Of course, they cannot be silent spectators, they will have vengeance when they feel insecurity. They also know that the bond of love is a shared phenomenon. Animal lovers presents such activities by providing

animals food and care. She casts a message that such love and care may enhance the idea of biodiversity and we can feel such biodiversity in our ecologically complete and multiple forms of life. In this ecological balance we can feel, “half hidden in the mists of the fall mornings” between human beings and physical environment.

Being a literary activist, she creates a model of place where human beings and animal beings dwell. In addition to this she marks unseen disease and threat to such ecological balance. But she writes in a nostalgic mode as if she may have lived in such an environment with a harmonious and calm setting. With many decades she spared life having a sense of peace and balance. She creates a symbolic town in which she gives an emphasis that Nature dwelled like this before the interruption of human beings. Now, the harmony and peace are fragile and destroyed. For such destruction, we are responsible after the use of pesticides. But at the concluding paragraphs she portrays the realistic picture of the use of pesticides and chemical fallouts. She writes:

Then a strange blight crept over the area and everything began to change. Some evil spell had settled on the community: mysterious maladies swept the flocks of chickens; the cattle and sheep sickened and died. Every where was a shadow of death. The farmers spoke of much illness among their families. In the town the doctors had become more and more puzzled by new kinds of sickness appearing among their patients. There had been several sudden and unexplained deaths, not only among adults but even among children, who would be stricken suddenly while at play and die within a few hours. (*Silent Spring* 10)

At the beginning, she gives perfect model of the balance of human beings and physical environment but later conveys a disaster consequence of the use of the pesticides. She employs a phrase “a strange blight crept over the area” that implies an invisible force that is decaying the environment gradually and very secretly. The use of the word, ‘crept’ is meant here, the act of the destruction is not sudden but gradual ie the use of the chemical fallouts and pesticides affects the environment gradually and invisibly. Further the use of ‘evil bond’ is a fairy tale metaphor that provides the meaning to readers that chemical invasion has advanced so much that it would be very difficult to overcome unless the Govt. controlled the uses and banned pesticides companies. Carson for this act marched on the roads of the United States to aware citizens for pressuring governments in the banning pesticides. She made a success by this activism. She describes chickens, cattle, and sheep are ill and dying because pests have infested the agrarian life. Even birds are migrating, they cannot adjust in the polluted biodiversity. For such infested lives and decay, she uses a phrase “Everywhere was a shadow of death” intensifies the tone of gloom and despair. She gives an emphasis that the metaphor death is now omnipresent and inescapable, because such darkness is prevalent everywhere in agrarian society and biodiversity. She, further mentions “sudden and unexplained deaths” of children to appeal human beings to stop this threat. Citizens of any state must pressurise their Govt. to stop the use of chemical for human continuity.

Findings:

- i. The destructive impact produced by the use of chemical pesticides
- ii. Descriptive use of chemicals in our lives
- iii. Bioaccumulation of DDT and other pesticides causing disease and death of Birds, animals and children
- iv. Aerial spray and speed of chemical causing cancer and genetic aberration.
- v. Material aspect of Chemical and Industrial Industries
- vi. Corruption of the State and the authorities under influence of industrialists.

Recommendations

- i. Carson critiques an indiscriminate use of chemical use
- ii. A chemical must be tested in a lab in a proper timeline before its use to the environment.
- iii. Stop Chemical spray because its affects water, air, birds, children, and our vital organs
- iv. It also affects fertility of land, animal and human beings.
- v. Stop chemical ingredients in food and drink.

Conclusion:

Carson critiques the use of chemical pesticides such as DDT, Aldehydes and other chemical fallouts from industries. She exposes a profound threat by the use of chemical pesticides to our health and environmental imbalance. The break within the bond between human beings and physical environment has been caused by the industrial complexes and an inordinate development in constructions and public transportation in the name of a facility to human beings. She clearly illustrates the significant value of biodiversity to our health, animals and children by interrogating the so-called the assumption of the development in the name of Science and Technology. In addition to this She has employed beautiful poetic language, sensory and visual images and pleaded for environmental harmony. Indeed reading her work *Silent Spring* readers make a conscious mind on ecological crisis.

References

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