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ISSN 2278-9529

Galaxy: International Multidisciplinary Research Journal
www.galaxyimrj.com

An Oikopoetic Study from the Selected Poems of Keki N Daruwalla

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Article History: Submitted-27/09/2018, Revised-03/11/2018, Accepted-04/11/2018, Published-20/11/2018.

Abstract:

The term oikopoetics is derived from the Greek word 'Oikos' which means 'household'. Oikopoetics or eco-poetics is the poetics of the Oikos that portrays the unity of spirits(sacred), culture, nature and man. The sacred, nature, culture and man live in an integrated relationship. In the world of humans, 'oikos' or 'houses' indicates the family under one roof. Oikopoetics investigates the historical, cultural, and philosophical concepts in relation to nature. Oikopoetics is categorised into three types. They are integrative, hierarchic and anarchic oikos. These three carries different explanations.

The Oikopoetic study through the poems of Keki N Daruwalla, teaches us values and methods to preserve nature and ecological disturbances happening in the eco-system. The purpose of this study is for the human world to understand that, every part of nature is created for a purpose and the purpose is accomplished in its own way.

Keywords: Oikopoetics, Integrity, Hierarchy, Anarchy, Human world, Nature.

The term oikopoetics is derived from the Greek word 'Oikos' which means 'house'. Oikopoetics or eco-poetics is the poetics of the Oikos that portrays the unity of spirits(sacred), culture, nature and man. Today's era shows the unity of all the three. They are clustered together and live in harmony. According to Nirmal Selvamony, the poetics of the Oikos means a "habitat comprising the spirits, humans and nature in particular. A typical Oikos could be regarded as a nexus in which the sacred, the humans, natural and the cultural phenomena stood in a relationship."(Selvamony 340). This study deals with the social, cultural, political and natural aspects of the human world. It depicts the human's spiritual connection with the natural components of nature. Apart from religion, 'nature' is considered

as 'God'. Oikopoetics investigates the historical, cultural, and philosophical concepts in relation to nature. All the religious scriptures depict that nature is the fundamental need for the survival of life. So, nature is considered pure and sacred. The Greek mythologies voice the greatness of planets and the name of God's are named after the planets. So, 'God is nature' and 'nature is God'.

The human's live akin to 'space and time' of nature, nature-cultural elements and to their actions pertaining to the universe. In the world of humans, 'oikos' or 'houses' indicates the family under one roof. Likewise, Oikopoetics houses all the human and non-human in the universe. Oikopoetics is categorised into three types. They have shaped the poetry of all languages. Any reader of poems can analyse the poems from an oikopoetic angle. They are integrative, hierarchic and anarchic oikos.

Integrative oikos is the first and foremost type of oikos which houses the sacred, nature, culture and human. They live as a family closely knitted together. The integrated oikos enjoy freedom and responsibility. They have their own rights, duties and obligations which binds the spirits, human and nature. they live in a 'kith and kin' relationship. Both horizontally and vertically, they are authoritative and live in unity. Black Elk, the chief of American Indian Tribe comments on integrative oikos that "the two-legged and four-legged lived like kith and kin"(selvamony 1).

Hierarchic oikos is a system, where the members of the Oikos are no more integrated but ranked according to their authority. Integrative oikos poses togetherness. In contrast, hierarchic oikos breaks such a bondage by acquiring a class system. Sacred stands at the topmost level, the upper level 'nature' controls the lower level 'the humans'. Here, politics takes a major role by splitting and organising into different ranks or levels. Integrative Oikos celebrates 'oneness' of kinship in a relationship both vertically and horizontally, whereas, in the hierarchic oikos, the relationship is configured only vertically in a hierarchical manner. Here, the "Oikos is no more a family, but a political unit where power is channelled only in a vertical direction."(selvamony 2).

The dwelling of hierarchic oikos has chosen to overpower politically. By giving sacred a superior role, there arises a distance between the 'sacred' and the 'humans'. The sacred reaches a special and a higher phase called 'holy'. The presence of human makes the 'holy', 'unholy' and so the sacred is no longer sacred. This division has divided the warm fellowship of God and man. Likewise, the human level has grabbed the next level of being

dominant over nature. the human world is the 'superior ruler' and nature is the 'inferior ruled'. When there is a hierarchic relationship, the top rulers hold a special space in the universe. They become rulers of the space both 'inside' and 'outside'. Similarly, nature is hierarchised amidst 'nature'. In the integrative oikos, all the forms of nature such as mountains, rivers, seas, trees, dry land, wetland, animals and birds were considered equal, they were considered important and unique. But, a hierarchic relationship does not enjoy this close relationship. Lands are separated into two, the wetland and the dry land, the wild animals and domestic animals etc. The flourishing land degrades the dry land. The mightier animals rule over the meek animals.

Anarchic oikos is the 'state of living without authority'. The hierarchy of the oikos began to break when the superiority of the sacred seemed to fade away. Today, the word 'sacred' is dubitable. The world is increasing on rational systems like logic and science. With an increase of such analytical thoughts, there is a rise in the "materialistic ideologies" instead of "religious doctrines" (Selvamony 4). The human world is level-headed today with logical and intellectual thoughts. The state of reasoning beyond limits has to lead to the loss of sacredness, God's and spirits. The world today attributes to the phrase that 'No act is a sin and every act is for a reason'. According to the human mindset, considering every act as a sin depicts a 'sign of immature reasoning'. So, 'matured reasoning leads to the absence of loneliness. The present world has lost its integrity, is hierarchal and is heading towards anarchy. The globe revolves, not being authoritative, living without anarchy. The 'sacred' is used and is just a 'need' for certain purposes like ceremonies and ritualistic practices.

Nature, which is the world's providence is undermined with no importance. Nature is used for man's convenience, but authoritative in its own way. In anarchic oikos, humans do not hold a rank like the hierarchic oikos. They are "looked upon as resources and assets."(Selvamony 4). Anarchic oikos is relocated from integrative and hierarchic oikos. It is an economic transaction of sacred, nature and man. Three hold a place in the market bargained according to their values. For the advantage of man, sacred, nature and man are exploited. 'Human exploited for the sake of man' is a miscellaneous act today. Rationalism and marketisation of the oikos began in India with the emergence of projects by the Britishers during their rule over India. The economic debate was at its heights when the Britishers started the industrial revolution in India by introducing "mega technology" (Selvamony 4) in the fields of building dams for the storage of water, power plants for electricity, processing and usage of cotton, automobile transports, and in the vast area of iron and steel. The

emergence of scientists and scientific scholars portrayed dominance over the spiritual and temporal society. Spiritual and the non-spiritual world are interdependent and considered to be equally important. A man seems to sway in between these two, leading to face the harsh realities of life.

The poetry of the anarchic oikos has undergone three different stage of alterations in the society. The first stage conveys the liberalism of hierarchic oikos. The poets considered rationalism, industrialism and nationalism as magnetic operations reinforced to liberalise hierarchism. The second stage introduced economic liberation. Economic liberation ruptured breaking the hierarchal order paving way for the rational, national and industrial forces. In the third stage, these liberations together began problematising the people's belief in God and fading away from the notion of divine force electrifying the world. This resulted to advance way of reasoning and questioning mythology and superstition. This advance reasoning leads to atheism, radical theologies, materialistic theologies like Marxism and socialism.

The theory of oikopoetics is made clear by analysing and projecting the human dancing to the tune of nature. The poems of Keki N Daruwalla presents the current issues of human domineering nature, human's respect towards nature, human understanding towards nature, and human exploitation of nature. This article is an assessment of Daruwalla's connectivity toward nature. Daruwalla poetry depicts the colourful splendour of nature. His poems reveal that he is emotionally akin to nature. Almost all his poems touches upon nature. His poetry also brings out the disordered and lawless attitude of humanism. Man has manipulated nature in every way possible. His poetry is an introspection of human behaviourism towards nature. clustering nature and human passions is the unique quality of his poems. He portrays the scenic beauty of India. His poetry calls us to travel along with him to the world of reality.

The poem *The Tawang Monastery* poses the integrity of sacred, nature and man. The poem displays the connectivity of Buddha (Sacred) and man (Dalai Lama), Nature, Tibetan culture and society. It is a conversation between the sixth Dalai Lama and monk named Lodre Gyastso also called Meera Lama. Like God, Lama communicated much through silences and not words. He praises Lord Buddha as the Lord of Benediction. He asks the monk Lodre Gyasto to prepare for a long journey to the forest sprayed with snow. He adds that his journey will not be an easy journey as he has to pass the hills and valleys of Tibet. He asks him to go far and reach for the people who are "untouched by the Buddha's grace"(Daruwalla 11).

Lama expects him to live there and build a simple and serene monastery not fanciful with glitters of gold. He advises him to paint with the yellow paint which would be visible to the goatherds and the kids look at. He asks him to carry some scriptures, easy to understand and not confusing. He asks him to carry some scriptures, understandable and not confusing. He continues advising him only to teach them simple deeds about being true to themselves and to keep away from materialistic passion. The following lines proclaim the unity of God, nature and mankind.

Let children roll the prayer drums and get their thrills

Tie prayer flags to trees, especially on heights

So that winds carry to valley and hill

His call for renunciation. (Daruwalla 11)

He asks them to place prayer tags in the raging watermill also.

The twist of the poem happens here. The monk passes a hundred lakes with his thighs sore and his horse. He felt the sting of the snowflakes behind his back. To forget the pain, he tries to stop and meditate during the half of his journey. But meditation does not help him. To the people around he seemed to be dead but did not die. They said and bowed murmuring "He is guarded by a spirit"(Daruwalla 12). He laid there like a wet hen as he had gone forever. The people were sure that nothing can harm him instead gift him with eternal life. He suffered physically, mentally and spiritually within wrapped in the misty ground. He had to travel a long way. His body had the deepest earnings to be away from the forthcoming struggles. A thought glanced across his mind, " Had the Buddha ever said be severe with yourself?" (Daruwalla 12). Yet, he cast such doubts away because he wished to save himself from going astray from God. The monk and the horse started their journey again.

They rode and reached the mountains, thick forests and sapphire coloured lakes. It was not icy as he expected. He chose a terraced place to rest. Without knowledge, he went into deep sleep. A man still finds a place to rest amidst the dense nature. He did not wish to keep away from the dangerous echoes of nature nor did he wish to return back but chose to travel along with nature. his faith and love towards Lord Buddha pushed him so long. He retired to deep sleep as if locked in his personal cave of meditation. Suddenly, he dreamt of a white horse gleaming on a sunlight meadow. The dream of that white horse awoke him in agitation. He got up wondering where he was. He felt a sense of magical realm in him on that

mount. He searched the area and ran down the pastures trying to get some information of where he was. He stood on the mount and felt the emerging from the cloud funnels like a temple gong. The rising of the fireball from the clouds and his imagery (brass sun) rang together. He considered it a 'good omen' and ensures his destiny. With happiness, he accepted the 'mount' as a 'holy ground' and built his monastery there.

This poem highlights the theory of integrative oikos. Sacred, culture, nature and man are tangled, the poem agrees that everything is a part of the universe. The monk travels accepts and acknowledges the wonder of the universe. He rejects the temptations and gains force to conquer. He understands the intercourse between the heaven (Sacred) and the earth. The dreams of the white horse connect him to the celestial world. He feels the sunshine and relates it to the present expectation of life. The monk feels the pulse of both heaven and nature and decides to build a monastery there.

The poem *Invocation* is a prayer to 'God' the 'Nature' by the people who dwell in the land of Devas. The land of Devas is in the Himalayan Region. 'Devas' are unique beings who guide the travellers in the Himalayas. They are "bright beings who guide the travellers in the Himalayas. They do not live in the places of the humans, yet they exist in the place far away from the dwellers of the land. For devas, nature was their God, companion, food, shelter and culture. They were a family and lived as a family. They spent their time in meditation under the shelter of nature. they knew the characteristic features of the mountains. They were akin to that region as they knew devas as their God. They do not harm the travellers who entered their region instead they provided shelter and shows them the right path to reach the village.

In the poem, the devas who are the 'Lords of Himalayas' surrendered themselves at the feet of nature and believed that nature would lead them to eternity. They attribute the nature as their endless one. They pray to the spirit of nature to forgive them if their usage of words such as 'thee', 'thou' and 'thine' sounds like words of disrespect. They believe that the spirit of nature hovers around the nests of the south winds and sandalwood groves. They plead the spirit of nature to light their way with the torch of nature. they ask nature how to differentiate between day and night. The poem ends by addressing nature as their endless one and with a note to show them the right way to travel in life.

Human dependency on nature is portrayed here. There is no dominance and hierarchy. They live together depending on each other. They help and support each other. The poem depicts the integrative relationship between nature, man and God.

The second part of the poem *The Epileptic* under the title "At Bansa" is from the anthology *Under Orion*. It pictures people who regard nature as a power of healing. Nature is related to sacredness. There is a woman who suffers from an epileptic attack. She is advised to be taken to the mosque nearby, at a place called Bansa. The worshippers of Allah promised their friends and relatives that she would recover because it was the first Friday of the month. That Friday was an auspicious day as it was a night when the moon was an ellipse. In the mosque, there pictured a huge crowd waiting for healing. Here, the nature, man and sacred stand in an integrated relationship. The moon makes the day even more sacred inviting the crowd from the nearby places. The human community rushed to the mosque expecting miracles to happen.

The *Eco Homo* is a poem based on the scriptures of the Bible. The title 'Eco Homo' means a picture which represents Jesus Christ given up to the people by the Pilate with Jesus wearing the crown of thorns on his head. The opening lines of the poem "A Goan Christ upon the Goan Cross, two linear rhythms." (Daruwalla 52) shows the interwind relation between sacred and nature. Christ is seen hanging on the cross. The sacred cross is believed to be made up of three different kinds of wood: cedar, pine and cypress. The cross made up of these woods was chosen by the mob to carry the body of Christ. God stands equal to nature. A wooden cross is considered as a symbol of pain, sacrifice and resurrection. The cross is made of the natural component wood, which is offered reverence by the people. Daruwalla's display of poetic lines is appealing. The poem continues to describe the scenes during crucifixion. The dry muscles and his dry spirit is nailed to the woodwork. There are scenes of Christ's mother and disciples kneeling at the feet of the cross. There are angels wringing in their hands. The wooden cross is placed at the altar surrounded by candles. The pictures show Judas of Kerioth, a disciple who plants a kiss on Christ's face which is a sign of betrayal. In this poem, integrative oikos shifts to anarchic oikos, where he shows his authority over sacred (Jesus). Judas's betrayal for the sake of thirty silver coins highlights the human's crave for money. Here, money is also authoritative over man. A crown of thorn is chosen to cause pain. Man chooses nature to cause bleeding and pain on the head of Christ. Man is authoritative over nature. human enjoys the rights to choose nature according to his/her wish. There is a continual description of the 'marked tree'(cross). The cross carried the fluent muscles and

limbs of Christ with bare forked feet. Daruwalla emphasises that "the Christ and the tree, like lovers caught in a cramp"(Daruwalla 53). The Christ and the tree are seen hooked forever. There are two concepts dealt with, the concept of the 'wooden cross' and the concept of 'Judas's betrayal'. The 'cross' symbolises integrative oikos and 'Judas's betrayal' denotes anarchic oikos.

The fourth canto of the poem *Dialogues with a third voice* can be viewed from the point of anarchic oikos. The poem starts with the lines "How long must I sacrifice the body and soul." (Daruwalla 61). Body is mortal and the soul is immortal. So, the soul is sacred and body is humane. Today, the most difficult thing is to surrender our ears to the soul. The soul is the spirit of man. The spirit conveys the right to the human body. For example, humanity knows committing murder is illegal. But, after the commitment of murder, the soul is guilty. Adding to this, the act of Lady Macbeth in the Shakespearean play Macbeth is an apt example to this. In the next paragraph, the human has a pessimistic idea that the future will not come. 'Live the present by following one's mind, not spirit' is an ongoing formula today. So, the spirit turns evil allowing the man to travel in illegal ways by deviating from God(sacred), destroying nature and being authoritative over man. Man exploiting man is prevailing today. 'Pay bribe and grab the first serve' is a demand of this era. Further, the poem portrays the egoism of humanity. The man chooses the best in nature 'the sun' and exploits the other. "Whatever has to come, let it come."(Daruwalla 62) is a lethargic way of considering nature. Man does not tend to save nature but chooses to crush and get perished.

The poem *Collage I* portrays the oneness of Indian culture and society. The poem portrays India as a benevolent country with various Gods, scriptures, poets, musicians etc. people of different cultures live in an integrative relationship. The poem speaks of different cultures live in an integrated relationship. The poem speaks of the laureate of Nobel prize, Tagore and about the musicians Ravi Sankhar and Maharisi Mahesh. The followers of Bhagavad Gita and the worshippers of Lord Krishna goes hand in hand. The land holds pride in having cross cultures and diverse regions. The poem pictures VIPs providing the needs of the society and shows the country as a light to the lepers. There are doctors striving their best to discover vaccines for deadly virus and plagues. The universe is bowled with different professions professional in their particular area of work. The world consists of good and bad, rich and poor, weak and strong, laureates, writers, poets etc. Human depend on humankind and live together.

Man cannot dwell without nature. In the poem *The Revolt and Salt Slaves*, nature shows its sovereignty. Food without salt is tasteless. Salt cannot be formed without sea and sun. The sun appears like a white fire in the sky doing its work by making salt columns bristling like an infinity of stakes. The sun produces intensely white embers of salt and it glitters in the sun. The poet praises the sparkling grains of salt. The sun shines and the bodies of salt are left behind. The eyelashes of the eyes gleam at the making film of the salt. Each grain of salt turns into a prism and lets out a bright spectrum of the white colour. Pertaining to the anarchic oikos, the sun is authoritative in performing its work by presenting rock-salt shells and dew sparkling salt crystals. Orion, a mythical legend here is introduced towards the last in this poem. The legend feels his cold hands and salted rocks which is like iron. The poem brings out the grandeur of salt. Nature is hierarchic over man.

The anthology *Crossing of Rivers* projects the theory of hierarchic oikos. It voices the political order of sacred, human and nature. Few poems of the anthology focus on the mother goddess, river Ganges. The first poem "Boat-ride along the river Ganga" praises the beauty of the river, viewed during the boat ride along the river. The along with his friend gets into the motorboat at the dusk of the day and travels along the waters upstream. The poet rides his boat slowly admiring his surroundings. The river and the astounding scenic nature around the Ganges. The beauty of the river unfolds the amphitheatre like a nocturnal flower in a dream. The flower discloses its scenic beauty by opening its petals. The further lines of the poem depict the hierarchic oikos and social ecology. The poet arrives on the shores of Ganges and feels queasy to be present there. The river lacked hygiene, which is the core part of his conscience. He curses his conscience and his way of upbringing as he is able to offer respect to the river Ganga. He does not forget to calculate the number of merits and the rows along. The poet crosses the pyres bowing his head to the finality of fate. He waits behind and gazes over the hazing heat arising from the fires through the pyres. The objects burning seem to shimmer and dance to the tune of fire. The poet depicts the reality he faces on the different planes of the river. The poet could hear the song of death vibrating behind the veils of fire.

Integrative oikos is portrayed in this poem. The people choose to journey to the sacred river carrying the corpse. There is no lament nor do they end up beating their chests with pain and tears, instead there is a mode of silence and satisfaction in their minds and faces. The river subsides the ache of the mourners. They form a ring of shadows and the flesh is all set to burn. The river provides room for the birds to quench their thirst. The flames around rising like fire edges. Here, sacred, nature and human stand in an integrated

relationship. Humankind considers the Ganges as a river of the sacrament. The spear-blades are heated red for the ritual. However, integrated relationship lead to the hierarchy of man exploiting nature. The flowing fresh river is discoloured with flowers, coconuts and coins. Around night, the waterfront is smothered by night and is peppered with a fire burning the body symbolising the 'unleavened bread'. The poet imagines that, if Dante, the well-known Italian poet and philosopher would have been confused at his visit to the river. Dante would wonder and feel difficult to name the city as 'the city of paradise or the city of purgatory'. The city is beyond the reach of pity with deadly air, diluted water and polluted shore. River Ganga is separated from the pleasant smell of nature. The poet proclaims that the concept of the river, bewilders and perplexes the world. He feels ashamed about himself having arrived at such a place surrounded with corpse-fires and cooking fires. He feels annoyed to call such a place as mother, daughter and bride. Ganges has lost its holiness because of the impure atmosphere.

Anand Amaladass, in his article "Sustainable Development and Religion: Towards an Economic Eco-Socio- Spirituality" justifies the above concept by mentioning a phrase from an old hymn "We are only guests on earth". Our purpose on this planet is to live in such a way that the forthcoming generation will find the same world we are in. Our duty is to make the world a better place to live and not worse. The world is not only a living space but has a divine origin. It carries divinity and it is itself divine in disguise. " we must see the world with a sacred mind (*Sacred-mente*), with a sacred sense, because the world itself is sacred"(Amaladass 30).

Ritualistic practices has contaminated the long flowing river. Human takes over nature in this poem. The poem "Nightscape" carries the same concept of the poem. As darkness grows older, the burning flesh turns to carbon on the ghats of Ganges. As the river keeps moving in the shimmering darkness, the temple is seen to be straining their necks to show their presence among the misty -scarves. The poet rises a question, whether the city in meditation is brooding over a ghostscape. The rising smoke from the pyres reveals a ghostly atmosphere.

The poem "vignette" glorifies the sacredness of the river Ganges. The river is swollen with songs and prayers. there are lepers headings their ways to the river to get healed. The poem draws the scene of women dropping coins in the coconut-shells for the palsied eyes to

get their sight. The river voices the pain of human. Like the boatmen hoist their sails, there are physically challenged people hoisting their deformities to get healed for life.

Integrative and hierarchic oikos highlights the sacred overpowering nature and man. The Ganges is a river of faith. The spider thread ritual is practiced. There are voices of chanting mantras as the ritual of pasting sandal wood on the tonsured heads of elders, men, women and children. There are pinddan (balls of rice) symbolically offered to dead ancestors, but actually fed to crows. There are kites hovering on the dead winds suspected shadowed animations of dead bodies. Till date, river Ganga is a meeting place of people of all ages.

Human beliefs connected to the environment would fade away as nature will not stand the same forever M.F Lee comments in her study “Environmental apocalypse: the millennium ideology of ‘Earth first’” that, many of the human doctrines may initially support nature but cannot sustain for long. Nature cannot support “millenarian faith”(Lee 133) by human.. It is the human who plays an important role in the history of the world. When the belief system is pushed to limits, nature brings human to judgement. As there is justification for any action, the wilderness becomes its own defence regardless whether human beings are harmed. Lee abandons such belief commenting that “Individuals who hold such beliefs are capable of wreaking significant havoc on the human civilization in which they live. (Lee 133).

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