

**Actuality of Monarch Butterfly Migration and Drastic Climate Change in
Barbara Kingsolver's *Flight Behaviour*: An Eco - Critical Approach**

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Abstract

Barbara Kingsolver is an award-winning author whose books are not only well-known in the United States but have also been translated into various languages. As a nature lover, her works often focus on the social and environmental problems of the World. The consumer attitude of mankind is the primary cause of most of the anti-environmental behaviours that lead to nature degradation. This paper offers a close reading of Barbara Kingsolver's novel *Flight Behaviour* analyzing the extent to which the novel advocates the psychological intricacies of climate change and its impact on the environment through monarchs. Nature critics believe that human beings interact with various species belonging to the natural world. Barbara Kingsolver makes use of the monarchs to communicate with human world through their behaviours. She beautifully conveys the affected life of the monarchs due to climate change through her prose narrative technique. This novel creates a mesmerizing comparison between the life trajectory of Dellarobia Turnbow, an unhappy housewife on the verge of cheating, and the migration of the monarch butterfly, a hypnotic yet earth-altering effect of climate change. In the present day and age, majority of scientists have really accepted the idea of increasing climate change. The heat in the surface of the World affects the life of all species on earth. Kingsolver considered the monarchs as the perfect vehicle for her thoughts which she intended to convey to the world. She considers the monarchs as the facilitators which help her to reach the other side of the world.

Keywords: Environment, Nature, Monarchs, Climate change.

Barbara Kingsolver depicts the plight of the life of Monarch butterflies through the novel *Flight Behaviour* and its foremost concern is climate change and its effects. Kingsolver stresses the ecological interconnectedness of all life and the biological imperative towards the survival of species. The ecological interconnectedness can be throughout the novel and often reflects the impact that human intervention has on the ecosystem. Kingsolver also looks with the question of how people interrelate with the environment and exercise their power over the environment.

The selfish nature of human and the technology causes animals to lose their homes and other organisms to lose their habitat. Due to excessive heat produced by the effect of global warming, the monarchs travel some thousand miles to live in a moist climate conditions. Ecocritics and environmentalists find that science and technology as the root causes of environmental crisis, which reduces the wealth of the environment and inflicts damage upon nature. The God given role to man as caretakers of the environment and natural systems is ruined by his harmful regulations against nature. Instead God expects man to give back to nature an intended purpose to act as caretakers. The Holy Bible confines,

And the nations were angry and they wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and then that fear thy name, small and great: shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth (Rev. 11.18).

Monarch butterflies are best known for their mass migration. The monarch butterflies which are referred as 'King Billies' (102) by Kingsolver in the novel, suffer intensely due to difference in temperature. They are considered as refugees and they lay their eggs on milkweed plant and in the larva stage they eat the leaves of it. The monarchs are considered as the only insect which is capable of flying great distances and even over ocean. It is an unbelievable fact that they can go around hundred miles a day. The acceleration of temperature has altered not only the living conditions of human but also various species belonging to the environment. The entomologist Ovid, Byron, visit the Appalachian mountain to record the behaviour of the monarchs. He informed Dellarobia that the normal lifespan of a monarch was about six weeks. Dellarobia recounted the words of Ovid as,

He'd been studying monarchs for twenty years, All over the North American continent. She asked him how long the butterflies lived, and his answer was baffling: winter lasted longer, a few months, by going into something like hibernation. Somewhere in midlife, the cold or darkness of winter put them all on hold, shutting down their sex drive until future notice.(200,201)

The monarchs usually seek a cold place for their mating process. They actually migrate to Mexico in winter. But the change in temperature has made them to move to a small town in Southern Tennessee. The whole Tennessee valley glowed with an orange flame during their flight which resembles a valley furnished in light. All the branches of the trees were filled with hanging clusters of butterflies. Many of the monarchs could not withstand the cold climate caused by the rains which increase the rate of mortality.

Climate change itself is an idea that moves towards frequently in the choice of the novel. For instance, the harvests on Bear's farm have been unsuccessful due to heavy rain or that Cub has to make strong effort bring in stone because the roads are regularly washed out. Also, "trees were getting new diseases now. The wetter summers and mild winters of recent years were bringing in new pests that apparently ate the forest out of house and home" (17) Kingsolver shows how the self-image of a community which practices hunting and logging struggles hard to accept the outcome of climate change. "Stop the logging, stop the lies! Save the monarch butterflies!" (324)

One more problem in *Flight Behaviour* is the role of science and scientists in the demolition as well as protection of the environment. Ovid Byron is the character in the novel reveals the fact that the monarchs affect chiefly due to difference in temperature. The nature of science is explained by Ovid as,

Science as a process is never complete. It is not a foot race, with a finish line. He warned her about this, as a standard point of contention. People will always be waiting at a particular finish line: journalists with their cameras, impatient crowds eager to call the race, astounded to see the scientists approach, pass the mark and keep running. It's a common misunderstanding. (484)

Every organism in the world exhibits their feelings through certain ways of communication. The butterflies even communicated with Dellarobia by resting on the path around her feet, which gives her a feeling of comfort and supports her to drive away her

passed memories, along with her emotions. They crossed her field of vision to a close extent and the black orange flakes made her to blink and merged in a chaotic blur in the distance. She found it impossible to believe the vision her eyes revealed to her. Even in her dreams she saw the flying behaviour of the monarchs. Everyone in the village accepted the fact that the monarchs are a sign from God. God's beautiful creation is reflected in the sight of the butterflies.

God has created this world endowed with different organism to help one another. Even life of little beings can provide a great feeling of confidence to make life glow brighter. The monarchs act as optimistic agents in Dellarobia's life to explore the boon offered by nature on the earth. She thought of the fragile creatures which own the span of the continent from Canada to Mexico, moving back and forth across the wide face of a land. Each one was very little, and she knew that they will die for sure, yet they constituted a force, like an ocean tide in her minds. The life of the monarchs taught her a great lesson not to rely upon anyone at any time and injected a new attitude to cope up with confidence in life.

All creatures in nature are connected in a delicate ecosystem. Only humans have a concept in solitude, and they are wrong in believing they are alone. Every choice that creatures make, including humans, affects the lives of those surviving creatures.

To wind up, it can be said that Kingsolver uses *Flight Behaviour* discuss environmental significance that are related to climate change and there is hope for better things to come. Kingsolver considered the monarchs as the perfect vehicle for her thoughts which she intended to convey to the world.

References

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