
Dravidian Novels through Ecological Perspectives

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ABSTRACT:

The present research paper is intended to explore the selected three novels in South Indian languages through an ecological perspective as the comparative study in this particular area has not been conducted so far.

Carvalho (1980) by K.P. Purnachandra Tejasvi in Kannada, Enmakaje (2009) by AmbikaSutanMangad in Malayalam, Ini... by MalanmyPonnuchami in Tamil are the selected novels to be investigated. Though the Novelists of South India are unfurling the local ecological concerns, they also reveal the global connections behind these issues. Therefore the hypothesis here is that ecology-based local novels are having dialogues with global issues.

Carvalho, a scientist with an international background and funding, fails to find a flying lizard and Mandanna, a rural truant claims to have seen the flying wonder. Thus the dialogical imagination of the global and local knowledge of ecology has been depicted. Devayaani and Neelakanta in Enmakaje discard their urban life and wish to lead a peaceful rural life. They reach Enmakaje and witness the sufferings of the people due to the aerial spray of the pesticide over the cashew grove.

The novel Ini strongly argues that agriculture is not merely a job but is a culture. Chemical fertilizers infused into the soil will delete the goodness of the earth. In depth study of these three novels as a part of the ecological discourse in Dravidian languages will provide a vivid picture of Human-Nature, Urban-Rural conflicts also.

KEYWORDS:

Dravidian Novels, Enmakaje, Carvalho, Ini, Ecocriticism.

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Nature worship is one of the striking features of Dravidian culture but Environmentalism began to crystallize in the second half of the last century, in response to the degradation of ecosystem, threats to wildlife, to wilderness and to human health, food and shelter; threats are global as well as local. Rachel Carson's 'Silent Spring' (1962), widely credited, because of the international response it received, with the first rallying of environmentalism as a public movement, was a study of the toxic effects of residues of industrial and agricultural chemicals in animals and human bodies. Margaret Atwood's 'Surfacing' (1972), Jean Hegland's 'Into the Forest' (1996) are the works must be mentioned here. Then the question arises 'What then is ecocriticism? Simply put, ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment. Just as feminist criticism examines language and literature from a gender conscious perspective, and Marxist criticism brings an awareness of modes of production and economic class to its reading of texts, ecocriticism takes an earth-centred approach to literary studies'. (Glotfelty 1996: xix)¹

Dravidian Novels: Nature, Culture and Modernism

Dravidian novels began to penetrate the theme of ecology as a core concern, most probably, in the decades of 70s in the last century. Charles Darwin's (1809-1882) Theory of evolution, Rachel Carson's (1907-1964) 'Silent spring', Karl Marx's (1818-1883) Class theory in 'Das Capital', Jules Verne's (1828- 1905) novels like 'Journey to the Centre of the Earth' ignited new discourses in the literary arena of South India. As already mentioned, Ancestral and Nature worshipping are the striking features of Dravidian culture and Ecological perspectives articulated in Dravidian novels have largely been interacting with Dravidian, Vedic and Western cultures.

"Ecocriticism is, then, an avowedly political mode of analysis, as the comparison with feminism and Marxism suggests. Ecocritics generally tie their cultural analyses explicitly to a 'green' moral and political agenda. In this respect, ecocriticism is closely related to environmentally oriented developments in philosophy and political theory. Developing the insights of earlier critical movements, eco-feminists, social ecologists and environmental justice advocates seek a synthesis of environmental and social concerns.'" (Greg, 2004.3)2. Such a synthesis of environmental and social concerns could be traced in the Dravidian novels.

The environment of the Western Ghats presented in the novels of Kannada writer KuVemPu is entirely different from the novels of his own son KPPurnachandraTejaswi (1938-2007). To KuVemPu, nature is a treasury of metaphysical contemplation, a common worldview of the Romantic writers, but to Tejaswi, it is a scientific revelation as in 'Carvalho (1980), secret

as in `ChidambaraRahasya'(1985) or gambling as in `Jugaari Cross'(1994). The three novels of Tejaswi give an account of the search, mafia connection and exploitation of the Western Ghat. But in the present paper only Carvalho has been selected for investigation.

Carvalho : Darwinian Theory of Evolution

Tejaswi's Kannada novel Carvalho (1980) features a set of people, who have set out in the Western Ghats in search of a mysterious flying lizard. Physical and philosophical adventures are carried out under the leadership of Entomologist Carvalho who is an internationally funded man living in a remote local area. His global links are suspected by the Police, Politicians and even by the neighbouring people. Scientific temper of Carvalho forces the narrator to imagine the former as a combination of an ancient Indian saint and a modern scientist like Darwin.

Litmus tests of the international theories are being done in the deep woods of Ghats, either the theories are localized or the experiences of the local, particularly of Mandanna's, are globalised. Carvalho is man, hailing from mangalore in the South Canara District of Karnataka, who left his family behind in Mumbai, dedicated himself to researching the insects, but Bee keeper Mandanna has been caught with his marriage troubles. Born Naturalist Mandanna is more than a peon to Carvalho and latter is a mere miser to Mandanna.

The team make a way into the thick forests around Norway consisting of a cook-cum-expert-tree-climber, bow-legged Biryani Kariappa, Camerman Prabhakara, the guide Mandanna, the snake-catcher Yenкта, Kiwi the dog, Carvalho and the

narrator. At the end of the novel a gasping chase to catch the flying lizard can be seen. Detailed narration of the bees, glow worms, insects are at the first half of the novel.

Carvalho has exaggerated the science and scientist. Trust, Reliability and Authenticity are the companions of the modern religion called science. Evolution theory of Charles Darwin and Missing links of the evolution are well narrated here. The Scientist seems to be a Superman having superpower. As expressed in the novel, understanding the ecology and science is necessary for the progress of the humanity and animal kingdom and having access into woods is like a religious meditation.

Science is a Religion and God in Carvalho, which has emotions and sensitivity. But in Enmakaje and Ini, science appears as insensitive and Devil to the humankind. There is a clear absence of the protest in Carvalho. But Enmakaje filled full of confrontations and Ini provides the hints at the agitation.

Enmakaje: A movement against the Pesticides

Woods, hills, caves, rivulets, wells and farmlands as well as flying lizards, dogs, crabs, donkeys, squirrel, monkeys, pythons, peacocks are characters in these novels, thus the whole narration is shifting from anthropocentric to eco-centric mode. In the three novels, few characters are from either outside or from urban area and a kind of inward journey into the jungle or nature could be seen.

In Mangad's Malayalam novel Enmakaje(2009), Both Neelakanta and Devayani reaches Swarga(Literally meaning Heaven), a tiny village in Enmakaje in Kasaragod District of Kerala State. They disowned their urban past, their identity,

their gender and reached rural Jatadhari Hills of Swarga. People believed in the curse of God, but the curse was actually due to the aerial spray of a pesticide called Endosulfan which deformed and even snuffed out the lives of the area.

Enmakaje was considered to be a land of Truth, land of Gods, land of multi languages, and land of thousand streams, almost like a heaven. But the land was totally turned into hell and paid the price for human ravenousness and bribery. To eliminate the tea mosquito in cashew plants, areal spray of pesticide Endosulfan has been used for more than four decades.

Disappearing Bees, birds and worms, deformed children, cattle are witnesses of silent spring spreading over the land Swarga. Natural Therapist Panji, Freelance journalist and farmer Sriram, Doctor Arun Kumar, Naxal Leader Jayaram along with Neelakantan and Devayaani tries their best to bring the dark faces of pesticide tragedy out.

Ini: Struggle to save the burning land

Devastation of farming due to the use of the pesticides and Corporatization of seeds is being narrated in the Tamil novel Ini by Malanmy Ponnuchami. Cotton seeds, Companies are making money and farmers are caught in the vicious circle of the debt. Shifting from traditional farming to scientific farming made farmer's obliged, dependent, sorrow full families. Local farming is being controlled by global seed and pesticide companies. Coal prepared by farmers is the only source of their income. Entire village becomes a wasteland. No water, No jobs, The Generation gap between elders and youngsters.

Both in Enmakaje and Ini, science is highly suspected as part of the capitalist approach as it has its funding agencies.

Carvalho represents the science of humanity and divinity. But the Pesticide and seed companies are representing the Human cruelty over nature. Science equals exploitation, Capitalism, devastating the local culture. Both novels argue for the local cultures which collapsed due to the invasions of the pesticides and global seeds. Binary oppositions like progress vs Tradition, Global vs Local, Unorganized farmers vs Organized companies are could be seen.

Ecological Perspectives

“The most alarming of all man’s assaults upon the environment is the contamination of air, earth, rivers, and sea with dangerous and even lethal materials. This pollution is for the most part irrecoverable; the chain of evil it initiates not only in the world that must support life but in living tissues is for the most part irreversible. In this now universal contamination of the environment, chemicals are the sinister and little-recognized partners of radiation in changing the very nature of the world-the very nature of its life. Strontium 90, released through nuclear explosions into the air, comes to earth in rain or drifts down as fallout, lodges in soil, enters into the grass or corn or wheat grown there, and in time takes up its abode in the bones of a human being, there to remain until his death. Similarly, chemicals sprayed on croplands or forests or gardens lie long in soil, entering into living organisms, passing from one to another in a chain of poisoning and death. Or they pass mysteriously by underground streams until they emerge and, through the alchemy of air and sunlight, combine into new forms that kill vegetation, sicken cattle, and work unknown harm on those who drink from once pure wells.”- These are the words appeared in the book called ‘Silent Spring’ by Rachel

Carson.

Conclusion

In the 80s of the last Century, science was considered humane and in the 90s inhumane and murder were institutionalized. Awareness about the pesticide can be seen in all the three novels mentioned above. Innocent characters like Mandanna (Carvalho), Panji (Enmakaje), Mahalaxmi (Ini), Progressive characters like Narrator, Jayaraj and Ramamurti, Exploiters-Companies-Officials- Politicians are seen. Metaphors of the death of nature, Honey bee, Lively in Carvalho but the same Honeybees are death knell to nature in Enmakaje.

Both the novels, Carvalho and Enmakaje, have narrated Human–Animal conflicts. The bee attack in Carvalho and The snake in front of the child in Enmakaje are the best instances of infiltration of human beings and co-living. Carvalho and Enmakaje showcase lush green lands of western ghat area but in Ini, it is almost barren land in Ini. Eternal Time sense and Absence of religion are part of Carvalho. Folk time sense and Presence of the religion could be traced in Enmakaje.

All the three novels portray outside characters entering into the inroads of woods or village. Carvalho is a scientist, who is in search of flying lizard, whereas local character is Mandanna. In Enmakaje, Nelakanta and Devayaani are outsiders and Srirama and Panji– are native people. In Ini, Ramamurti is an outsider character while Jambulinga Nadar a indigenious. The Depth of the human intervention in an assault upon the environment could be clearly graded in three shades: It is lighter in Carvalho, darker in Enmakaje and Darkest in Ini.

Source Books:

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