

CONFRONTATION BETWEEN NATURE AND CULTURE: AN ECOCRITICAL ANALYSIS OF SELECT MALAYALAM FILM

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The literary and cultural criticism from an environmentalist viewpoint signals the emergence of a new type of literary criticism and it has been now accepted as ecocriticism. Ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and physical nature from an interdisciplinary point of view where all sciences come together to analyze the environment and the contemporary environmental situation. Ecocriticism, as a cultural criticism evaluates the literary text in terms of their nature, whether it has environmentally harmful or helpful effects. Ecocriticism always connects the literature with issues of today's environmental crisis.

Ecocriticism mainly concentrates on how literature interacts with and participates in the entire ecosphere. Here the possible relations between literature and nature are examined in terms of ecological concepts. It attempts to find a common platform between the human and non human to show how they can coexist in various ways, because the environmental issues have become an integral part of our existence. Literature is purely aesthetically and culturally constructed part of environment and it directly addresses the questions of human constructions, such as meaning, value language and imagination.

Nature and literature have always shared a close relationship. The intimate relationship between the natural and social world is to be analyzed by ecocritics and they try to study how this close relationship between nature and society has been textualised by writers in their works. The existing culture has been wiped out with the changes of civilization which resulted for the changes of environmental nature and human nature. Literature always reflects the contemporary issues. The world of literature discussing with works dealing with beauty and power of nature. The continuous threat and misuse of environment poses on humanity has only recently caught the attention of the writers.

Cheryll Glotfelty defines ecocriticism as the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment. So many questions have been raised by ecocritics and theorists regarding the representations of human and non human beings in this universe. In the celebrated book of ecocriticism named *Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, Cheryll Glotfelty introduces such questions in front of the readers such as:

How is nature represented in the sonnet? What role does the physical setting play in the plot of this novel? Are the values expressed in this play consistent with ecological wisdom? How do our metaphors of the land influence the way we treat it? How can we characterize nature writing as a genre? In addition to race, class, and gender, should *place* become a new critical category? Do men write about nature differently than women do? In what ways has literacy itself affected human kind's relationships to the natural world? How has the concept of wilderness

changed over time? In what ways and to what effect is the environmental crisis seeping into contemporary literature and popular culture? What bearing might the science of ecology have on literary studies? How is science itself open to literary analysis? What cross-fertilization is possible between literary studies and environmental discourse in related disciplines such as history, psychology, philosophy, art history, and ethics? (xix)

Ecocriticism shares the fundamental doctrines that human culture is connected to the physical world. The interconnections between nature and culture especially the cultural artifacts of language and literature are the subjects of study under ecocriticism. Literary scholars put forward the questions of value, meaning, tradition, point of view, and language, and it is in these areas that they are making substantial contributions to environmental thinking.

Film criticism is one among them in which the ecocritics have taken interest in film and visual media. The film critics especially in the field of ecocriticism focus on films that are considered 'environmental', especially those that portray nature and its defenders positively. The study of film representation of the relationship among human and natural and man-made environments is the nascent field of film ecocriticism. Ecopolitics, ecofeminisms, ecophilosophy and the science of ecology will be the matters for ecocritical film discussions. The term ecological media surprisingly has not been formally defined, despite this there has been a more within ecocriticism to understand ecological media as a study of non print media as it applies to environmental discourse action.

Film writers and critics have been surprisingly remiss from really exploring ecological concerns or even the potential for cinema to present new ways of relating to the earth. Also understanding cinema has been largely responsible for reinforcing our feelings of separations from nature, not showing how we are intimately connected and dependent on the ecosystem around us. The most popular literary genre for ecocritical exploration and celebration has been that of nature writing. To an extent that there is a cinematic equivalent of nature writing, it would arguably be the wildlife film or nature documentary. In order to represent the reality of life, the film medium, despite its promise of a photographic realism has been used to represent nature and to show the natural environment. In wildlife films, wildlife/wilderness/natural film history presents an image of nature that is modeled to fit the medium. In most of the films related with nature environmental issue is raised explicitly and it is the central to the narrative of such eco-cinecriticism.

Chemmeen (1965), the film directed by Ramu Kariat, from the screen play by S L Puram Sadanandhan, is based on a highly Malayalam novel by the Jyanpeth award winner Thakazhi Sivashankarappillai. It was the first south Indian film to win the president's gold medal award for best film. The film tells the story of a pre-marital and later extramarital relationship of a fisherwoman, the daughter of an ambitious fisherman, and a son of Muslim trader. The theme of the film is based around the popular belief or myth among the fishermen community along the coastal Kerala State in southern India regarding chastity that is if the married fisherwomen was infidel when her husband was in the sea, the sea Goddess (Kadamma) will be furious and it will affect the entire fishermen community. The film develops on the ecocritical awareness in the mind of fisherman community. Living very close to nature and enjoys maximum freedom out of it, human beings always forgets their basic human quality that is to love the nature. The faith of the people in the seashore is based on the believes which they got from the beliefs from Kadamma or the Mother Sea that is to lead a life with strict social traditions and an affair or

marriage with a person of another religion will subject the entire community to the wrath of the sea.

Nellu is a 1974 Malayalam film directed by Ramu Kariat and screen played by S.L Puram Sadanandhan, based on the award winning novel of the same name by P. Valsala. The film is about the tribal people on the Wayanad hills in the deep Kerala forests. It is noted for its aesthetic quality and is regarded as a land mark in the history of Malayalam film. The film portrays the life of ‘Adiyar’ community, a tribe whose ways of life belongs to nature centuries ago. They live in the Wayanad hills in the deep Kerala forests. The film envelops the passion, superstition, religious practice, customs and the servility and exploitation of the tribal people endure.

Considering film as a text, the study attempt to analyze the texts based on ecocritical theories and it examines the representations of nature and women through a socio-cultural viewpoint and how the nature is interpreted in the text through an ecocentric view point rather than an anthropocentric view point. Appreciation of nature depends upon our willingness to submit to nature’s guidance. This attitude is developed through listening through nature’s story and appreciating it on its own terms instead of imposing our own story upon the nature. The freedom which the men enjoy or the other animate objects enjoy in nature is the result of the rule or law of nature. The intervention of human beings explores every law of nature to the universe and the nature is being re-assembled by human being. But along with the civilization the human nature was changed and they can no longer get space to interact with it: but instead of that they began to exploit it completely. As an eco critical perspective it is understood that the nature, even it is the see or deep forest has become a product of cultural artifact, and the culture has colonized the realm of nature.

In these two films, the characters are appreciating the nature by listening the different stories of it. Here the characters are always forced to interact seriously with nature to be a part of it and to form a particular culture out of these interactions. Living in nature, the human beings here are forced to hear the things which are happened around them. In the case of *Nellu*, the entire story is narrated through an outsider and his experiences with nature are narrated through his words. Each and every character in the films has their own individual identity and also they have identity within the society itself. But the ecological aspects such as cultural aspects, spiritual aspects, political aspects and even the individual perception to nature connects them to mingle with the natural environment. While analyzing the film it is seen that certain character sees nature through a utilitarian attitude; that is nature exists in front of them to satisfy their needs. In the anthropocentric power system the men always keep suppress both nature and women alike as it narrated in *Chemmeen*. This utilitarian attitude persuades the characters to exploit the nature and women in its full strength.

As literature is considered as a means of moral constructions, the studies examined how literature and art interact with each other and how ecoconsciousness raising the environmental thinking, it always plays a vital role to understand man’s position in the universe. It also examines how these films represent the silence of nature and how it can explore discursively manipulated non-human world in literature and also it discussed how it gets marginalized or silenced and also incorporated into the human language. From these films it is clear that the culture of a particular person or the culture of a particular region is always determined by the nature, especially the nature of human and non-human being.

Any attempt to understand the nature for what it is closely related with, natural sciences or other discourses, often indigenous, such as folklore and myth. These two discourses play a

vital role in understanding the nature in two films as a whole. The myth and folklore which are common among the fishermen, foresters or the lay man determines the appreciation of nature on its own terms. The myth and folklore are connected through the eco spirituality and these spiritual elements in the mind of certain characters always see nature as their god. The myth and folklore which have been spreading among the people connect them each other and it also create an interconnection between man and nature.

The culture of a particular region has been developed out of the construction upon environment such as meaning of their life, value of their living and so on. That is why the culture of the forest region gets totally different form the culture of sea shore, because of their attitude towards nature is entirely different. That is their order of life determines their interactions with nature. Culturally different people react differently towards nature and also seen that the mode of their exploitation of nature is also different. In an anthropocentric society power structure determines knowledge about nature. The man who posses power always keeps the knowledge about nature from the historical and social formation of power structure of the universe.

To conclude, all the characters are representations of the entire part of the environment. The main focus is given to the collective ecoconsciousness along with the individual perception of knowing the nature as a whole. In these two films, there are several centres of attention which work simultaneously for the consciousness attention. Here the different cultures are mingles with other and even each characters and places are given names according to the functions which they perform in the ecosphere. Within the collective consciousness of different characters, there can be seen each one's individual consciousness also. Each and every person can individually or collectively communicate with each other within the cultural situation. The spirituality, that is the ecospirituality, myth, and memory play a vital role among the human and non-human being as a cultural bond among them. To conclude the two films represent the cultural and social representations of nature in which the nature and culture mingles with each other and representations of women and nature are alike and anthropocentric society always perpetuate the power to suppress both women and nature.

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