



ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Literature

ECO CRITICAL CONCERNS IN THE POETRY OF O.N.V. KURUP

KEY WORDS: Eco Criticism, Ecology, Environmental Poems, Poetic Image, Naturalistic Humanism

Dr. Brincy Mathew

Assistant Professor, Department of Malayalam Devamatha College Kuravilangad.

ABSTRACT

Today the world is changing vigorously and the developments dismiss the ecological concerns for nature. Literature often addresses the environmental issues and does its duty in healing the nature. Ecocriticism is a branch of Literary Criticism that deals with the relationship between literature and the physical environment. Environmental poetry explores the complicated connections between people and nature. O.N.V. Kurup was a renowned poet and lyricist in Malayalam. His works focus on Eco critical aspects such as landscape, sense of consciousness, eco-anxiety about the environmental changes etc. The present study is an attempt to focus on O.N.V. Kurup's poetry in the theoretical frame work of ecocriticism.

INTRODUCTION

Nature is the mother of man. Mankind cannot survive without relying on nature. Man's view of the bond with the environment is as old as human history. The term 'Eco Criticism' was first coined by the American Writer William Rueckert. The historical roots of the theory can be traced back to the first essay by William Ruckert, 'Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism.' The term Ecocriticism comes from the Greek words 'Oikos' and 'kritis'. It refers to the study of relationship between Literature and Physical Environment. It involves the application of ecology and ecological concepts in the study of literature. "Eco Criticism explores the ways in which we imagine and portray the relationship between humans and environment in all areas of cultural production". (*Ecocriticism :2*) It is also relevant as a critical approach that encompasses the entire habitat.

Awareness of nature and the environment has always been at the heart of Indian Literature. This is indicated by the Upanishad Verse; '*Isavasyamidam Sarvam, Yat kincha Jagatyam Jagat.*' But Western environmental philosophy was completely different from the Indian perspective. Western scientists such as Bacon were of the opinion that science could exploit the hidden sources of nature. However, the exploitation of nature results in drastic consequences that include climate change, scarcity of water, depletion of natural resources and so on. The realization that the destruction of the environment is the collapse of culture has led to the emergence of Environmental Literature and Green Review criticism that also made their first appearance in the western world.

The comprehensive Environmental Philosophy was introduced in Kerala as a poetic philosophy and applied project since 1980s. But a deep connection with nature is evident in Malayalam Literature, especially in poetry since in the beginning of the 20th century. In the poems of Asan and Vallathol, nature is being idealized as a contributing factor to human emotional life. Anxiety about the exploitation of nature and nostalgia for village life can be seen in romantic poems. Poets like Edassery, Vailoppilly, Olappamanna, N.N.Kakkad, Ayyappapanicker, N.V.KrishnaWarrier, Sugathakumari, Kadammanitta, Sachidhananthanan, D.Vinayachandran have all come up with a new environmental vision and arena consciousness. Most of the poems of O.N.V. Kurup were based on Environment and emphasizes strong Ecological concerns.

O.N.V.'s Environmental Poems

Ottaplackal Neelakandan Velukurup (1931-2016) was a well known Malayalam poet and lyricist, who won the Jnapith Award in 2007. O.N.V. shares his vision of the environment by presenting his own coastal village Chavara, in South Kerala. He drew themes and inspiration from the bio-diversity found in Kerala. Joseph Mundassery, the famous Malayalam critic said that O.N.V.'s poetry smells of raw earth.

O.N.V.'s Environmental poetry can be divided into two categories:

- 1) Poems that present the beauty of nature
- 2) Poems that present the dilemmas of nature.

Kerala's nature and life are literally embedded in O.N.V.'s poetry. In the first category of poems the poet deliberately discusses the beauty of nature in the poetic discourse. O.N.V.'s poetry is considered as the manifestation of highly evocative images of nature. Various flavors of life are internalized in his poems. Green paddy fields, flowering fields, paddy fields where pigeons fly etc. are recurring beautiful images in O.N.V.'s poetry.

The second category of poems very well throws light on the modern consumerism that is armed to destroy the beauty of fields and nature at large. The poems like *Bhoomikkoru Charama Geetham, Keralappana, Sravanageetham, Nilatheerat huveendum, Panante Dhukham etc.* address the issues of ecological preservation.

Landscape in O.N.V.'s Poetry

O.N.V. is the master of Advaita philosophy and sees its soul in the mother universe. The poet's love of nature develops as he realizes that all the people of the world are brothers and sisters and are equal to each other. O.N.V.'s poetry is based on Naturalistic Humanism. Life on earth is a continuous stream and human beings constitute the different points on it. O.N.V. writes in the introduction of 'A Dirge for the Earth' as follows:

*'Eni vaztham:
Ee bhoomiye, athile
Jeevithamenna Mahapravahathe, athinte
Lavanya saramaya Kavithheyeyum...'(1-4)*

(A song of praise/ For this earth/ For its surge of life/ For poetry, the essence of its beauty.)

He also writes in the poem *Verumorathmagatham (Just a Soliloquy)*:

*'snehippoo njanennyalkkareyennathum sathyam!
Snehippoo njanee manniloro pulkkodiyeyum!'(13-16)*
(It is true that I love my neighbors /And I Love every grass in this soil.)

He considers nature as our mother. If nature is our mother then exploiting nature is like killing our mother. The ideas of a spiritual environmental consciousness can be found in O.N.V.'s poems.

*'Ellam valarunnu, pookkunnu, kaykkunni-
Thellattinum valakkooruttathinnilam
Uzhi thannakshaya pathrathil ninnore-*

Soorante choodum velichavumunnuvor
Varnnangal, Chollukal, vevvereyenkilum
Onnichukoodi kazhinjathaninnilam! (Choroonu 127-132)

(Everything grows, blooms, bears fruit, / This fertile soil is the same for all / Feeding the same sun's heat and light from the 'akshayapathram' (inexhaustible vessel) of Earth / Though diverse in colours and texts / United we lived in this land.)

The scenic beauty of Kerala

O.N.V.'s poetry contains vivid references to the Kerala architecture that is appropriate to the nature and climate of Kerala. Indications of Kerala architecture can be seen in the poems like *Pazhyoru pattu*, *Veedukal*, *Shaarngka Pakshikal* etc. In O.N.V.'s poems we can see nature full of flowers, fruits, birds, hills and lakes.

'Onnumariyathe kanikkonna poothu veendum,
Kannilinnupoymarayapponkinakalpole!
(Enthininum poothu? 1-2)
(Unaware, bloomed again golden showers / Like dreams that never disappear from sight)

Eco-Anxiety

O.N.V. was pained by the environmental destruction in the name of modern consumerism and development. He heartbrokenly wished 'eternal peace' to the Soon-to-die Earth in his celebrated *Bhoomikkoru Charanma Geetham* (A Dirge for the Earth).

The gloomy poem opens with the lines:

'Eniyum marikkatha bhoomi!—ninnasanna-
Mruthiyil ninakkathma santhi!
Ethu ninte (enteyum) charamasrooshayku
Hrudhyathilinne kuricha geetham. (5-8)
(O Yet-to-die Earth! I wish you eternal peace
Upon your upcoming death;

Here is the Verse I have penned in advance in My heart
For Your (mine, too) funeral homily.)

O.N.V. strongly condemns the irresponsible actions, material production and greedy consumption of Man against the mother Earth.

The poems like *Bhiravante Thudi*, *Ee Purathana Kinnaram*, *Ardha viramangal*, *Kshanikam-Pakshe*, *Njanagni* also reflect the broken desires of the poet. Many of O.N.V. poems are about the sadness of losing old green fields and agricultural world along the way.

Poetic Images

The poetic imagery helps the poet to reveal and interpret the ideas of his heart. Image is the medium that leads the leader to the poet's point of view. O.N.V.'s poetic images are objects of Nature. Fire, Water, Wind, Sky, Earth, Flowers, Birds, Rivers, Trees, Stars, Night, Dawn, Day etc are the recurrent images used by O.N.V.

Earth is a symbol of the maternal power that is active in O.N.V.'s poetic consciousness. In Earth, O.N.V. sees not only the mother, but all aspects of femininity. In his early poems, the soil remains a symbol of agriculture. In the poems like *'Mayilppeeli'* the Earth emerges as the mother image against the backdrop of family life. The Earth is a good mother who provides shelter and sustenance for living things.

'Ninakku nivedhippoo mannidamorammathan-
Nira vakshasil ninnumuzhukumamruthathe!' (Orumma 33-36)
(The Earth offers you the nectar that flows from a mother's bosom.)

The Biblical image of 'salt of the Earth' is used by O.N.V. in the poem 'Choroonu.'

"'Bhoomi thannuppu nukarunu nee paithale!
Bhoomi thannuppai valaru'"kenningane'(149-150)

(Hey, child!, may you take in the salt of the earth and grow up as the salt of the Earth.)

The sun is also an ideal image that awakens nostalgia in the poet. The image of the sun represents the masculine nature of the poet's mind. And it gives power and light.

'Hey soorya! neeyente
vakkinte thiriyilni-
Nneriyunu! neeyente
vakkayi ninneriyunnu!' (Sooryageetham 216-219)

(Hey, Sun! you burn from the wick of my word, / You remain burning as my word.)

'Agni' enters as a symbol of inner prowess. Fireflies, fire flowers, fire-winged birds like many symbols can be found in O.N.V. poetry. Flowers for O.N.V. are poetry, music and beauty. Salt is a symbol of mother and grandmother in O.N.V. poetry. Salt is also a cultural image. Birds, Snake, Rivers, Wind, Nectar are the repeated poetic images used by O.N.V. One can say that O.N.V.'s poetry is full of images of nature itself.

CONCLUSION

O.N.V. Kurup was one of the leading environmental poets in Malayalam. He considered nature as a superior phenomenon than human being and the survival of human beings depends on nature. O.N.V. poetry offers a vision of the discreet relationship between man and nature. He deliberately discusses the beauty of nature. He emphasizes that the separation of man from nature is suicidal for both nature and the human society. His poems could very well express the modern consumerism that is potent to destroy the beautiful nature and its blessings.

O.N.V.'s poetic images are all taken from the various entities of nature. O.N.V. is a poet who sees poetry as a seed and a harvest. He chooses the objects of nature as poetic images. O.N.V. has transformed poetry significantly to a vision that awakens the soul and establishes a strong connection with nature and time. He passionately embraces the colorful vibrations of nature and time. O.N.V.'s environmental poetry which considers Nature as the mother, is sure to survive the test of time.

Acknowledgement

It is my privilege to express my gratitude to my colleagues who motivated and provided insight to prepare such an article. I am grateful to my institution, Devamatha College Kuravilangad, for sharing with me the wisdom for this research. I am also thankful to the staff and authorities of Devamatha College library and Ramapurathu Warriar Library.

REFERENCES:

1. Greg, Garrard. *Ecocriticism*. London & New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2004.
2. Jakrishnan, N. *Malayalathinte Sooryageethangal*. Thiruvananthapuram: Kerala Bhasha Institute, 2010.
3. Kerridge, Richard. *Literary Theory and Criticism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.
4. Kurup, O.N.V. *Oyenvikkavitha*. Kottayam: D.C. Books, 2006.
5. Pathmana, Ramachandran Nair. *Paristhithy Padanangal*. Kottayam: Current Books, 2010.
6. Pothuwal, P.P. *Paristhithikkavithayakoramukham*. Kottayam: D.C. Books, 1995.
7. Soman, P. *Oyenviyude Kavijanmangal*. Kottayam: D.C. Books, 2011.
8. Zaccaria, Jolly. *Oyenvikkavitha, mozhiyum porulum*. Kottayam: Current Books, 2008.