

Ecological Vision and Human Conscience in Perumal Murgan's *Rising Heat*

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Abstract:

Ecocriticism is the analysis of a literary work from the perspective of the natural world and societal environmental change. Ecocriticism holds that nature has a substantial influence on a text. It is the presentation and consideration of environmental challenges, cultural conflicts, and human attitudes toward nature. This paper deals with the Ecological Vision and Human Conscience of the novel Perumal Murgan's *Rising Heat*. The author's dialect, which he utilised to explore Tamil culture and tradition, is also shown in the research. As an English translation of a Tamil book, the words from Tamil are used to highlight the true essence of the characters, forest, and community.

Keywords: Ecocriticism, Dalit, Dialect, Urbanization

Literature has dealt with environmental issues ever since man first developed his creative abilities. Because indigenous tribes have given nature the dignity of the great mother, humans and nature are inextricably linked. The modern ecological conscience holds the conviction and understanding that both humans and non-humans who are depicted in literary works must contribute to restoring the equilibrium. Either as a protector of nature or as a destroyer of it human lives in the contemporary world. Humans are intimately connected with nature, where they could easily link life with lakes, rivers, farm land and places for inhabitation. People could not accept their damage over nature. The world could witness the consequences like the depletion of ozone layer, Oil spills, nuclear wastes, Global warming,

acid rain, destruction of tropical rain forest, extinction of species, loss of top soil or drying of rivers and lakes.

Man who is interested mainly in the economic growth forgets his duty over the conservation of nature. So, there come the writers in the end of 20th century and the starting of 21st century to speak on ecocriticism. The present day novels in literature have an emergence of writing about the great sufferings or injustice. The writers mostly from the southern part of India have channelized and documented the culture of diverse people, their tradition and living.

The writers, who are primarily from the southern region of India, have channelled and chronicled the culture, tradition, and way of life of many people. The term "Tinai" is first used by Tolkappiyar (1000–600 BC) in his book Tolkappiyam. Tinai is not just a notion; it is also the early Tamils' social structure and lyrical style. Specifically, the writes from Tamilnadu like Jeyakanthan, Indira Parthasarathy, Ashokamithran, Ki.Rajanarayanan, Poomani, Cho.Tharman, Tho.Paramasivam, Jeyamohan and Perumal Murugan, have their writings over nature. The contemporary writers of Tamil have made a huge impact over the people, academicians and critics, which had taken the Tamil literature era to the global level. Ecocriticism is the concept first arose in late 1970s. It explores the combination of literature with the physical environment, biological aspects and the damage that caused by the human activities on environment. It is also called as 'green studies' or Environmental criticism. Michael P. Branch traces the word 'Ecocriticism' back to William Rueckert's 1978 essay *Literature and ecology: an experiment in Ecocriticism*. Ecocriticism started with three major nineteenth-century American writers Ralph Waldo Emerson(1803-1882), Margaret Fuller(1810-1850), and Henry David Thoreau(1817-1862).

When it comes to one of the most prestigious awards, Sahitya Akademi award stands top in promoting literature in India; Imayam was awarded for his novel *Sellatha Panam* in 2020; Cho.Tharman bagged the award in 2019 for the book *Sool*; Poomani was awarded for

his novel *Agngnaadi* in 2014. Each novel brings out unique culture, socio-economic status and tradition over the people of Tamilnadu. When it comes to Tamil literature the language spoken is most noted and the way the slang is used; to be said as dialect.

Presently the writers like Ki.Rajanarayanan, Poomani and Perumal Murugan has their style of writing on Karisal land. Moreover, it speaks on the marginalised society on the whole. The discrepancy between the caste, race, and sex influences the economical and political power over this marginalized people. As Sharan Kumar Limbale in his *Towards an Aesthetics of Dalit Literature* says,

Dalit literature is cast in the form of social realism. Especially autobiography is appropriated by the narratives of the oppressed groups. It is a genre that opens out to shared experiences which are in fact biographies of the community and a socio-historical narrative of their own.
(25)

Perumal Murugan, an Indian writer from Namakkal, Tamilnadu was a Professor in Tamil. As a writer and renowned scholar, his contribution to Tamil literature is distinctive. His usage of dialect specified to Kongu Tamil has its own taste and smell while reading every pages of his works. This paper deals on the ecocritical sufferings of the people of lower caste being suffered from urban developments in the novel *Rising Heat*. The author's first novel is written originally in Tamil titled *Eru Veyil*(1991) , perpetual work of art translated by Janani Kannan. The novel narrates in the view of a 11-year unnamed boy who witnesses his ancestral lands being taken away for housing development and beats the socio-economic consequences as he grows into adulthood. As a translator, Janani speaks about the work of Perumal Murugan as,

The realism of the events in the novel is intricately woven with the way he develops the seemingly simple characters. These are characters with layers of emotions, desires and insecurities, defined by their experiences and circumstances that make them act the way they do. He seamlessly but never overtly narrates the various characters' extreme actions and the

dire situations they find themselves in, without evoking the sense of right or wrong. (Murugan xii)

Ecocriticism is the approach to bring life to the text, where the unspoken, untold view on nature by humans can be exposed or read as a Metaphorical representation. The novel transcends not only the life of the boy but also the people, the family, the community as the whole. The story shows the politics over the caste, disparities over the economic condition and the relationship among the people after the big change which is regarded as urban development. The boy used to play with the dog named 'Mani' which is unleashed many times. He used to take him around the village and walk around the forests. His father used to tell him, "Why keep it leashed? It will behave without one." (Murugan 11) The animals are also given freedom and equal importance in the life of that boy. "The dog ran through the thorn-laden forest. The erstwhile foot tracks were covered with undergrowth." (Murugan 11) The effects of urbanization can be seen in the very beginning of the novel itself. The trails of undergrowth show that the people stopped using the forest for living. The boy who chased the dog found himself deep in the forest. He was shaken by the view seen inside the woods and compares with the past:

Everything was in ruins. Was there anything around to help identify precisely where he was? He spotted the fences that divided the Veera forest from the mango forest. They were made from kiluva trees and were all but destroyed. Walking along them would lead to the path to Itteri. Even though the tar road that ran past the temple went all the way to the lake, it was this path that the pedestrians frequented. He walked along the fence. His skin was wet with sweat and glistened in the sunlight like a gleaming piece of wood soaked and darkened with rain. His feet were completely covered with dust. His eyes roamed everywhere. Hugging the temple on the east side was the Veera forest. ON the west was the Minna forest began, right in the middle. Farther and higher away were the Veli forest and the Manuva forest. The mango forest ended at the lake pit that was shaped in the form of an unearthed brick. It spanned over

a hundred acres or so. The rest were open lands bearing pearl millet corn and groundnut.(Murugan 12-13)

The primary occupation in the community is farming. If farming had been done, the boy would have seen the trails leading through, but no such traces were discovered, indicating that the agricultural population may have relocated to other locations when their lands were acquired for urban expansion. He also notes the tar road, which had to be built only after urbanisation because it was the path used by people to stroll on, and the fences made of kiluva trees. While explaining about the life of people, Perumal Murugan gave a clear distress about the urban development as,

Within this region had lived twenty families. His was four families. Then there was his grandfather's younger brother and his sons, his grandfather's older brother and his sons. Other than them was an *evaari*, a merchant from Karattur who owned two acres. His looms and sizing business fetched him abundant money. He looked just like a piece of sun-dried coconut. He had filed a lawsuit against the government for taking his land. Well, he had the muscle and money to spend on lawsuits, but what could the rest do? They and their families were displaced from their lands. (13-14)

Perumal Murugan has rightly drawn the line between the rich and the poor, between the known and the unknown, between the tenant and the landlord, between the high caste and the low caste, between the *evaari* and the *kooli*. As a *evaari*(a merchant), land is taken, he files the case against the government to get back his hand, but how could the people of everyday wages file a lawsuit. That ultimately ends in displacement. William Rueckert in 1978 essay *An Experiment In Ecocriticism* says that,

The problem now, as most ecologists agree, is to find ways of keeping the human community from destroying the natural community, and with it the human community. This is what ecologists like to call the self-destructive or suicidal motive that is inherent in our prevailing and paradoxical attitude toward nature. The conceptual and practical problem is to find the

grounds upon which the two communities-the human, the natural-can coexist, cooperate, and flourish in the biosphere.(107)

To conclude, the work of Perumal Murugan has taken a huge leap in the part of ecocritical approach. His criticism over the urban development is not over the officials, politicians or the officials; it is on the whole on human society as they are responsible for the destruction of the nature. The most crucial role of writing today is to draw attention to the plight of man in a vulnerable natural environment. Despite being dismissed and neglected by contemporary postcolonial ecocriticism, ecological writing thrived under a widely shared feeling of peril outside the literary establishment's ivory tower. To sum up, Perumal Murugan's work has advanced significantly in the area of ecocritical thinking. His critique of urban growth is directed at human civilization as a whole since they are to blame for the extinction of nature, not at officials, politicians, or even other authorities.

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