



Ecocritical Perspectives In K.P. Poornachandra Tejaswi's Literary Landscape- An Overview

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Abstract:

This research paper probes into the ecocritical dimensions inherent in the literary universe of K.P. Poornachandra Tejaswi, a prominent Indian author known for his profound engagement with ecological themes. Through an ecocritical lens, the paper conducts a comprehensive analysis of Tejaswi's literary works, exploring the deep interconnections between humans, animals, and the environment. In this sense, the study aims to shed light on Tejaswi's portrayal of the natural world, his depiction of human-animal relationships, and the ethical implications embedded within his narratives. Furthermore, the paper investigates the ecological imagery that contributes to shaping Tejaswi's unique literary landscape. By contextualizing his work within the larger framework of ecocriticism, this research paper seeks to unveil the enduring relevance of Tejaswi's ecological ideas in contemporary discourse and their potential to inspire environmental consciousness and sustainable practices in the 21st century.

- The paper, in the meanwhile, proposes to cover the following questions:
- How do the ecological themes contribute to the overall narrative structure and meaning in K.P. Poornachandra Tejaswi's literary works?
- What insights does Tejaswi offer through his depiction of the relationship between humans and animals in his literature?
- What are the contemporary concerns about environmental sustainability and conservation in the concept of man-animal kinship?

Keywords: Ecological Imagery, Conservation, Kinship, Sustainable Practices, Environmental Consciousness.

Introduction:

In the field of ecocriticism, there has been a longstanding belief in the profound influence of environmental narratives on the attitudes and behaviors of their readers. Advocates of ecocriticism have emphasized the importance of affective and emotional processes in the creation of these narratives and their societal effects. Lawrence Buell, in his work *The Environmental Imagination*, posits that nature writers such as Henry David Thoreau and John Muir developed a deeply personal love and reverence for the non-human world, which, over time, translated into a strong protective sentiment towards nature. Buell argues that this personal affection for the non-human environment and the resulting protective emotions found expression in literary texts like Thoreau's *Walden* and others. He contends that these texts had a significant impact not only on individual readers but also on American society as a whole. This suggests that environmental narratives can shape or at least influence the emotional and rational comprehension of readers, and even those who do not engage with such narratives.

The conviction in the emotional impact and societal relevance of nature writing and other environmentally focused texts, as advocated by Lawrence Buell, finds common ground among numerous environmental authors and critics. In her introduction to the *Cambridge Companion to Literature and the Environment*, Louis Westling highlights the resonance of this belief. She notes that works from the mid-twentieth century, such as Aldo Leopold's *Sand County Almanac*, passionately advocated for the ethics of nature and the preservation of wildlife. Concurrently, Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* vividly portrayed the catastrophic ecological consequences of pesticides.

Indian literature has incorporated ecocritical themes through the works of several renowned authors, including Raja Rao, R.K. Narayan, Bhavani Bhattacharya, Kamala Markandya, Ruskin Bond, Rahel Azima, Amitav Ghosh, Kiran Desai, and many others. In a world currently grappling with acute environmental challenges, writers such as K.P. Poornachandra Tejaswi have emerged as influential voices. Their writings serve as a powerful medium to underscore the critical importance of our planet's well-being. These literary works not only impart knowledge and awareness but also instill inspiration in readers, encouraging them to scrutinize their surroundings and become advocates for sustainable living. Tejaswi's writings are enriched with ecological insights that shed light on the significant environmental challenges our planet faces. These challenges, including global warming, pollution, deforestation, climate change, floods, and droughts, are pushing our world to the brink of losing its ecological diversity. As a result, they are disrupting the profound connection between humans and the natural world.

Diverse Flora Depicted in Tejaswi's Works

K.P. Poornachandra Tejaswi, an eminent writer, hails from Navya and Bandayasahitya movement of Kannada literature. Though he never called himself a post-modern, his representations show the seeds of postmodern trends along with ecocritical aspects which he authenticates majorly in his writings. Tejaswi from the beginning of his literary career was fascinated by philosophy and pure science (as opposed to applied science). He was a person who had multiple interests in his life and integrated his interests into his stories and novels. He had an interest in Pure Science, Philosophy, Photography, Fine arts,

Music, Computer technology, nature, environment, hunting, fishing, bird watching, and wandering. His narratives invariably intertwine various facets of his diverse interests. Nonetheless, he emphasized that these aspects should not be disentangled or viewed as distinct, analytical writings. Instead, he advocated for his works to be perceived as comprehensive and all-encompassing.

We can observe that Tejaswi was influenced by Kuvempu's Poornadrishi (complete vision), Ram Manohar Lohia's Socialism, and ShivaramaKaaranta's adventurous experimentations. As Tejaswi was a prolific wanderer, his narratives have a unique picaresque quality. Karvalo is one such novel where the author participates in an adventure of discovering a flying Lizard in the dense forest of Western Ghats. He refused the artificial construction of center-margin bifurcation and wrote from the periphery. Therefore, the elite and the low characters simultaneously appear in his stories.

This paper, in this background, sheds light on the perspectives on contemporary ecocritical aspects as observed by K.P. Poornachandra Tejaswi and other eminent ecocritics. The uncontrolled exploitation of nature often brings callous doom and destruction to human relations with plants, animals, and nature. The disappearance of species, herbs, and plants is liable for continuous global ecological imbalance can also be noticed in Tejaswi's writings. Therefore, it is the right time to place eco-conscious ideologies before the entire world in order to transform people's minds towards environmental conservation and ecological sustenance. Tejaswi in his writings asserts that nature has its own nuances and intricacies. No doubt it will open itself for human exploration and adventure. But it will not give up its innate mystery to human understanding completely. Human rationality is fascinating but human hubris is not. Tejaswi, influenced by modern science and the rationality advocated by Ram Manohar Lohia, has tried to explore unexplored territories of this universe.

Classical aesthetics of nature was essentially a theory of the representation of nature in the ecocritical writings of Rachel Carson, Ramachandra Guha, Vandana Shiva, and others. Today, this range is much wider, as ecological aesthetics of nature, is a complement to scientific ecology, which as human ecology investigates the metabolism between man and nature. In contrast, an ecological aesthetics of nature is concerned more generally with the condition of human beings in environments as it is shown in Poornachandra Tejaswi's writings.

Thereby, the notion of nature plays a decisive role. The ecological ambience in Tejaswi's writings paves way to meditate between objective environmental qualities and the subjective conditions of human beings as it can also be noticed in Two Kinds of Environmentalism by Ramachandra Guha. Poornachandra Tejaswi in his collections of short stories Parisarada Kathe claims that an ecological aesthetics of nature has both a critical and productive tasks. On the one hand, it serves as a critique of inhuman environmental qualities, and on the other hand provides criteria for the re-cultivation of devastated natural spaces.

In Millenium Stories, Tejaswi underscores the need for a reevaluation of nature and its aesthetics. He posits that as the suffering caused by modern society reaches unprecedented levels, he aims to explore the philosophical dimensions of nature, where

it regains its structured significance in aesthetics, characterized by its magnificence and enduring qualities. Theodor W. Adorno, an eco-critic, shares a similar perspective in his work, *Aesthetic Theory*. Adorno views nature as possessing a subversive potential, symbolizing that which endures despite the societal tendency to categorize and functionalize. In his view, nature stands for the body, the individual, the tangible, and, consequently, the unique phenomenon of nature.

Tejaswi's interconnectedness of flora and fauna may also be identified in his attempt to convert a marshy area adjoining a stream into paddy field. The moment seeds were sown, it attracted many spotted Dove *Streptopeliachinensis* eagerly devouring all the seeds spread, and hardly very few sprouted. Consequently, the seeding plot was covered with meshes and succeeded in growing seedling defeating Dove. Then seedling was transplanted into the prepared field. Aquatic weeds' thriving well on the upper part of the stream is a good breeding ground for many White-breasted Water hens *Amaurornisphoenicurus*. Consequently, the transplanted paddy-field was more or less completely devoured by these water-hens. Paddy cultivation was abandoned forever in the marshes.

Tejaswi makes a significant observation that a habitat with a consistent food supply is favorable for the growth of various populations. Over the past four to five decades, extensive areas in Shivamogga district, particularly after the construction of the Lakkavalli and Gajanur dams, have been brought under irrigation. As a result, crops are cultivated year-round, leading to a substantial increase in the population of the Baya weaver bird, scientifically known as *Ploceusphilippinus*. This growth can be attributed to the availability of sugar cane, which serves as nesting material, and the cultivation of rice, which has contributed to a manifold increase in the bird's population.

Tejaswi's Advocacy for Diverse and Enduring Fauna

The Ornithological observations of Tejaswi depicted in his literary works show that he had good bond with birds and animals. As Tejaswi says 'Birds are part of my life', they appear in his narratives as any other human characters. Similarly human presence could be felt in his birding recounting. Birds and animals have been portrayed as having intellect and character as they are in his writings.

Tejaswi argues that usually all wild birds and animals are afraid of human beings; our slightest movement against, drives them away. This was experienced by him during his hunting of the wild animals. Once, while Tejaswi was standing on a river bank, he offered a tiny fish to the Sandpiper. Astonishingly, after a few minutes of dilemma, overcoming its immense fear imbibed by the evolutionary intuition of not accepting offered food, the bird accepted food and ate it. Over a period, it became an avid follower. It was so habituated that even an act of throwing, used to attract the sandpiper from far off distance. At this stage, Tejaswi and his friends had a feeling that friendship might pose a danger to the bird if it approaches the stranger. They try to keep a distance but it was too late.

Tragically, the Sandpiper met a sad end. It swallowed the fishing hook with a bite, assuming it as a morsel of food offered to it and died instantly in front of their eyes. A

point was proven again that human friendship would always spell a doom to the wild creatures. So never befriend wild animals, it will definitely harm them. As Tejaswi says if we don't take necessary steps to preserve the wild life very soon, leopards, lions, and tigers may become like animals that need to be discovered by fossils, like ancient seagulls.

Tejaswi advocates that *Anthracosceros* and *Buceros* spp in India and many other species of the world are useful to amplify the calls and effectively communicate in the thick forests. Calls are languages used to perform a variety of functions like establishment and maintenance of territory through advertisement or could be attracting a mate. Hornbills breed in crevices in larger trees.

The bills of Hornbill are effective tools used for transferring food to female and chicks during incubation and rearing. It is believed that this structure acts as a vibrating chamber to make the hornbill's voice louder. The calls made by the bird range from the deep booming sounds they make as they begin foraging to brays, toots, bellows, and cackles. The bill and casque of juvenile birds are underdeveloped, and females often have much smaller casques than males. This may be because males also use their casques to attract mates and display their health and strength to other males. Tejaswi at one stage, questions himself- all the living beings are most energy efficient, evolved during the evolutionary process spread over millions of years, then why did heavy and large bills (Casques) adorned by Hornbills have not changed?

For instance, a female Malabar pied Hornbill *Anthracosceros coronatus* without any feathers on its body was found in a hollow cavity of a large fallen tree. Female Hornbills shed their feathers during breeding as they are concealed inside a dark cavity for a minimum 40 days. Though a detailed breeding biology is not reported on Malabar pied Hornbill. However, on the basis of Malabar grey Hornbill *Ocyrosus birostris* (Mudappa 2000) has total nesting period of 86 days including post hatching phase of 46 days, it is assumed that Malabar pied incubates 40 days almost equal to studied bird.

Tejaswi asserts that birds appear in his narration as any other human character. Similarly human presence could be felt in my birding recounting. Birds have been portrayed as having intellect and character as they are, in my writings. I haven't perceived bird watching as an amateur or ornithologist pursuit. Nature is always portrayed as main character in my novels and short-stories'. These words of Tejaswi aptly represent his inquisitiveness on birds and nature.

The contemporary ecocritical narratives urges for major current environmental issues which include climate change, pollution, environmental degradation, resource depletion. The conservation movement lobbies for protection of endangered species like tigers, leopards etc. and protection of any ecologically valuable natural areas and ecological sustenance at large. Ruskin Bond in his writings has not only described nature in his writing but also expressed concern for natural depletion. Ramachandra Guha in his book *The Unquiet Woods* also shows reasons for protection of forest and its adverse effect on wild life.

David Attenborough, a naturalist and conservationist has highlighted the urgent need for conservation and sustainable practices. Margaret Atwood often incorporates in

her writings the elements of environmentalism and ecological concerns. In particular, her novel *Oryx and Crake* explores a dystopian future shaped by environmental degradation.

On the splendid work of Salim Ali, Tejaswi opines that finding new bird species other than listed by him in Indian sub-continent would be a Herculean task. Even in the present tech-savvy scenario, with so many individuals interested in birds, NGO's and Government institutions, we are unable to either check or update the birding status of area where Salim Ali had once conducted earlier survey.

Conclusion

In the contemporary era, the significance of ecology and environmental sustainability has risen to the forefront. While ecological themes have been present in literature for some time, Indian writings have also embraced this trend. However, it is K.P. Poornachandra Tejaswi's ecocritical narratives that have distinctly highlighted and encompassed all these ecological concerns. In the current context, there is a pressing demand for an eco-friendly environment that minimizes conflicts between humans and animals, fostering growth and sustainable prosperity. Tejaswi's writings effectively bring these concerns to the forefront.

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