

## Space and Scope of Eco-Poesy in Contemporary Malayalam Literature

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### Abstract

Eco- poesy has already become part of the literature worldwide irrespective of the linguistic or national barriers. Protection of the eco-space around any contemporary human inhabitation or space has been quite inevitable ever since it became a challenge to live on a planet which is destined for a survival. In the scenario, it was quite natural that responses concerned come across many a part of literature. The literary figures of the time have given apt importance for environmental protection through their writings. As in many other languages, the idea of eco-poesy appeared particularly in Malayalam poetry. This was because Kerala is a part of the most sensitive eco-zone, the Western Ghats and could never move away from eco orientated discourses. The poetic world of Malayalam handled the issue seriously, ascertained and exhorted the immediate necessity in protecting the environment and often criticized the movements against it.

**Key Words:** Eco-poesy, Western Ghats, eco - sensitive zone, Sugathakumari (poet), Personification of Natural settings

### Introduction

The doom of environmental destruction was being transcended in texts. The contemporary Malayalam poets of the pioneer sort may be enlisted as Sugathakumari, Rafeeq Ahemmed, Murukan Kattakada, Kureepuzha Sreekumar, Veerankutty, P. Madhu etc. They were envisaging the future of the Planet emphasizing the importance of Eco-protection through their mighty poems. Since the space of Kerala in the Eco-space of the world is pivotal due to the presence of Western Ghats, an inquiry into the space and scope of Eco- literature will be worth. The main objective of the Paper is an analysis and correlation of the environmental issues and protection, depicted in various poems concerned which elicit the space of Eco-poems in the conservation of Nature.

### Sugathakumari:

Sugathakumari, one of the leading environmentalist and poet has provided a space in a series of her poems regenerating the awareness of the contemporary and forthcoming environmental issues. As a committed conservationist, she led the campaign to save the Silent Valley. Nature and rain appears very occasionally in her poems. The poem *Rathrimazha* depicts the beauty of the rain at night. According to her, even rain and anything in nature assumes an embodiment of human life. She describes the night rain as crying, laughing and murmuring for nothing just like an insane maiden. She goes on narrating that the night rain, the sorrowful daughter of the beautiful night is touching her softly, through the window panes of the hospital as a long sigh.<sup>1</sup> She parts her concordance with the sorrow of the night rain towards the end of the poem. The poet

identifies the melancholies in the song of the night rain; her mercy; the suppressed anger; arrival at night; sobbing in solitudes; but appearing afresh in the morning with an artificially smiling face, being wiped off all the sorrows.

Sugathakumari considers the night rain as an enlivened character. The personification of natural originations lets her render as much importance to each and every part of nature. If the nature or any part of it enacts a live person or a part of our life, its protection automatically becomes affirmed to us, as a social responsibility. This Psychological approach might form the base of all the Eco - poems of Sugathakumari. Similar is the way of personification of nature in another poem *Thulavarshappacha*<sup>2</sup> in which she considers the greenery of Waynad district after a heavy monsoon, as rejoicing like a bride. There also rain plays a crucial role, kissing the earth softly like a lover, in the beginning, and embracing her later. The shrubs which were grown afterwards, formed an arch and seemed like the green velvet *Ravuka* of the bride. (—the old fashioned blouse with a knot at its bottom centre)

The personification of the sort touches the hearts of the readers and gets identified with them. This makes them feel or cause a personal attachment towards nature which enforces them to protect it and fulfils the primary aim of the poet. Since there are true followers for nature and Sugathakumari, it may be said that the idea works.

#### **Murukan Kattakada:**

The famous poet, Murukan Kattakada has observed much importance to Eco - poems. The poem *Thirike yathra*,<sup>3</sup> is a clear scenario of the exploitation of rivers.

The rivers are being fenced and choked by the inhabitants of both banks. The sand at its depth is explored and travelled on the wheels of extreme greed. The river is left for mere sake of its name. Under these circumstances, the river pleads to *Bhageerathan* in the epic, whose toil had brought the Holy River Ganges from heaven to earth, to take her back to heaven again because, the rivers on earth are going to extinct on account of the relentless loot of the people. Here the poet affirms his stand with the river and speaks for her.

The poet narrates that the river is crying and hailing *Bhageerathan* to take her back to heaven, afraid of being vanished from the earth and heaven for ever. The river is happy to remember those good days on earth in the beginning when it had flowed freely, purely and softly touching the banks. The water in it satisfied the thirst of the flora and fauna which brought about the prolific sprouts of progress and development in the area. But things changed soon; Man became least interested in anything other than amassing money which caused the slow death of rivers. The personification of the poet himself, in place of the melancholy river is again a technique to bring about the attention of the readers to a crucial environmental issue.

The poem *Paka*<sup>4</sup> is yet another word picture of environmental pollution. The poet vehemently criticises the attitude of the common folk for not having any sense of guilt in the exorbitant pollution of rivers and environment. He envisages the contemporary dreadful situation of Nature in the poem. 'Our extravagant avarice blackened the river; our extreme deception whitened the hills; we marked the black sand on the shore kissed by the waves, and

wrapped off to the markets. Hence the earth, rivers and hills and even the smoke-engulfed days are wrathful towards us. The resultant life in this over - polluted world is then narrated. Swollen bellied children who had drunken the chemically polluted water; white lilies which became black as night; sky which became dark, not of the dark clouds but of the stumpy smoke; flowers which have taken as much poison; Even the wind smells the reeling poison. Hence the wrath of Nature is foaming, fuming and sobbing ashore as the unrest waves.'

**Kureeppuzha Sreekumar:**

Kureepuzha Sreekumar also comments on the inhuman assault on Nature. He writes 'a letter of repentance' to a white lily, in the poem '*Thumpappovinu Oru Kathu*'.<sup>5</sup> He consoles the white lily that he too is a subject of a cheated king (*Mahabali*- the legendary king) and still being cheated. His face too is trampled and wounded under the boots of *Vamana*. The nature trampled over by the trespassers marks the context.

**Rafeeq Ahammed:**

Another important poet who has always kept watchful eyes towards environment is Rafeeq Ahammed. '*Mazha*'<sup>6</sup> is one of his poems in which the intrusion into the Nature is exemplified. 'The rain is mixed up with blood; it burns the hands or branches of trees as it contains foaming acids or poisonous liquids; the earth became a desert in which thousands of small hands are raised to heaven pleading for Grace.'

The poem *Oru Jalakanayakayude Katha*<sup>7</sup> creates a chronicle about the 'evolution of well'. 'The young rain beauties had once come down to earth, leaving behind their

dhotis of dark clouds in the sky, with the accompaniment of lightning which shook the turbulent rainbow on their abundant hair. While they were dancing beautifully there, one of the maiden fell down into a ditch near our courtyard and was unable to get out of it even after her rain friends had returned back. We called her well and drew her tears and truth.'

**P. Madhu:**

P. Madhu is yet another contemporary Malayalam poet who draws our attention towards the destruction of Nature in quite a simple manner. His poem '*Kalakal*'<sup>8</sup> says of it. 'We use many medicinal plants like, *thumba, tulsi, anachuvadi* etc. for the use of singe medicine therapy. We squeeze them to extract the essence to get recovery from even fatal diseases. But we destroy them when not in use saying that they are mere weeds. When they are in need, they are medicinal plants and otherwise, weeds.' The selfish attitude of the human beings to avoid whatever not in use for the time being is applicable to destruction of Nature and is criticised here.

**Veerankutty:**

Veerankutty is a poet has always spared some space for environmental observations. Many of his poems have found their backdrop in Nature. The poem *Athijeevanam* refers to the survival of a small grass plant. 'It is small; it spreads as much greenery as it can; it shows flowers; still it is doubtful whether it will survive the summer.'<sup>8</sup> Hence the poet seeks the help of the small trees nearby to protect it. The small grass plant should be able to change the burning Sun's rays to golden ear rings to adorn its ears or make it a cooling cap if it has to survive. Otherwise the summer will eat it afresh as it is known

by the poet. The poet is very particular on even the minute existence of greenery in nature since he identifies that the gradual eradication of the same naturally leads to desertification. The survival of the Nature instead that of a minute plant is questioned in the poem.

In his poem, *Penmarangal*,<sup>9</sup> the poet moves a step ahead with the humanisation of trees. He feels 'pity for leaving the nude 'young lady' tree to the bare hot Sun.' 'Sometimes wet in rain; some other times

join hands with wind; dancing with the flexible body; concealing the lightning underneath the thick hair....'The poet might think that humanisation of natural elements could seek means for their protection.

More number of poets with the same attitude and vigour is worth to be mentioned in Malayalam literature who have the mettle for inculcating a positive attitude among the society towards the conservation of Nature.

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