

# Nature and Malayalam Literature

1Dr.Joji Madappattu  
1Assistant Professor  
1S.B College,Changanacherry

---

## **Abstract - The Engraving of civilization in Malayalam Literature**

**keywords - civilization,literature**

---

Literature is an expression of life. There is an adage that literature makes life perceivable to the senses. A writer recreates the life around him in words; it is called creative recreation. A writer does this recreation using the mould of his/her talent. Humans have no existence cut off from nature. Nature combined with environment makes humans who they are. This being the fact, how can human lives be seen separate from Nature? How can nature be dispensed with in the recreation of human life? There is no life sans nature, and the case of writing is no exception. The experiential rhythm of forest, sea, home, travel, diasporic experiences, etc. engage constantly with the inner world of humans. Then how can nature fail to have a pride of place in literature and art?

For the Indian psyche, nature is neither a mere thicket of trees nor a sanctuary of birds and animals. It is the cradle of human life and the holy mine of hallowed philosophies. Our philosophies and epics had their genesis in the forest. The very first verse of India's first epic was born out of Valmiki's anguish at the sight of one of the krouncha birds being killed by an arrow. The Myth has it that our first poet was a fowler. As per the myth, he sat under a tree and chanted 'ramarama' which later became the holy name of God; he was at length covered by a termite hill, and metamorphosed into Valmiki as he came out of it. It is worth musing on the inextricable relation these stories have with nature.

Ours is a great philosophy which considers nature as a goddess and the Ganges as mother. Ours tradition believed in the maxim, 'dasaputhrosamavriksha.' In our practice of 'jataka', each person, according to his astrological day, has been given a particular bird, animal and tree. In short, ours is a tradition which is organically related to nature.

Kalidasais the Indian poet who embraced nature absolutely. In no other literary text can one see the communion between humans and nature as in Shakunthalam. The intimate bond between humans and nature is palpable in the text. Shakunthalam's fourth act is an exemplar of the maximum degree to which nature can be present in a text. Even though one does not find such an extend of nature's presence in Malayalam, Malayalam literature's close tie with nature is absolutely evident from its very beginning.

Though nature's presence is limited in Vaishikathantra, which is considered the oldest among the works of Manipravala, one perceives an abundance of the sensations of nature in its figurative usages. The land, environment and nature are described in concrete terms in unnichirutheyicharitham, one of the ancient Chambupoems. The work abounds in picturesque descriptions of the sights of nature. Our ancient Sandheshakavya, Unnuneelisandheshampresents a cross section of the then geography of Kerala. In the description of the land stretching from Thirvananthapuram to Kaduthuruthi, poetry is intertwined with nature and environment.

The cock crowed like the trumpet of Kamadeva

The stars like maze appeared pale and scattered

The Sun and the Moon appeared as though to beat to the gait of the damsel dawn

Swarms of beetles rose from the lotus like smoke from fire

Nature and human life immersed in it throb in this kind of portrayals  
of dawn.

'Kanangalilarankalirumaykariniyay...', is the beginning line of Ramacharitham, the first poem in Malayalam. Human life engrossed in nature is manifest here too. Life's passion for nature is veritably manifest when one pays obeisance to Ganapathi who was born from the union of Siva and Parvathi when they rollicked in the forest in the guise of bull and cow elephants. In Thirunizhalmala, which could be called the successor of Ramacharitham, the social customs and rituals of the period are depicted. One perceives the fullness of the symbiosis between life and nature in it. The poet describes even the nightly appearance of stars through images steeped in the experiences of agriculture. In the works of Niranam poets, worship of god is blended with worship of nature as nature, flowers, their fragrance, and breeze appear in the verses. Madhavappanikkar in his Bhashabagavadgitapresents profound philosophical thoughts by relating them with nature as a means to simplify them.

Akin to their source texts, Ezhuthachan's Adhyathmaramayanam Kilippattu and Mahabharatham Kilippattum maintain close relation with nature, especially with forest. Exile to forest is a crucial factor in both the texts. We experience forest dwelling in Mahabharatha; only that in both the texts forest dwelling is a form of punishment. Village, town, forest and settlements are portrayed in both the texts.

KunjanNambiar expressed his nature awareness in an extraordinary measure. In the description, both the forest and settlement are equally desirable for the poet. Nambiar recreated everything in nature in their most animated state. Unnayivarriar, who was a contemporary of Nambiar, maintained close relation with nature in his poetic compositions. One could justifiably say thatVarriar's partiality for forest is loud and clear in his depiction of Nalan who perceives dense forest as town and palace. Nalan's perception of the dense forest as beauteous houses and Sadhusabhais immensely charming. Forest is simultaneously the witness of the tragic turns in the lives of the hero and heroine and the arena where the story takes place.

Albeit precise accounts of environment and nature are limited in our folklore tradition, most of them put forward a unique perception of nature and the resultant environmental awareness. Forest, water bodies, settlements, nature, and environment appear in many a folk song as the pleasure spots of humans; a culture in which mango tree and jack tree are valued owing to their yield. Nature is portrayed as a threat to human existence in some folk songs; accounts of nature's onslaught on humans; some scenes of human suffering on account of nature's fury. Later, humans proved that they can retaliate against nature with more impact. Some folk songs also present a desirable symbiotic relation between human life and natural world.

Poetry maintained its close alliance with nature in the renaissance and modern period. Kumaranasan presented his characters in the backdrop of forest. Divakaran in Nalini appears in Himalayan land. Nature appears to beautify the ambience in ChinthavishtayayaSita and Lila. Asansang :

'To the trees, birds, animals, humans  
And devas, and the simple rasa of love  
That is stored up in their minds.'

Changampuzha portrayed Ramanan who grazed goats in the shades of the forest. Vazhakkula, written in support of the depressed classes, is set in the lap of nature.

When the allegation that P.Kunjiraman Nair describes but a human-less world was levelled against him, the poet replied by saying that humans too are a part of the nature eulogized by him. Honest love for nature fills the verses of G. Sankarakurupp. Vailoppilli presented the earth as mother, lover, poetry and language. The poet wishes:

'Let the mind hold the spirit of village  
Scent, love and some flowers of golden shower.'

For O.N.V poetry and letters are no different from nature. His poem "Aksharam" demonstrates it clearly. O.N.V's poetic images are all drawn from the various entities of nature. The various demonic acts of humans against nature prompted the poet to write "BhoomikkoruCharamageetham." The poem mortifies anyone who thinks seriously of nature. Sugathakumari's poetry represents the forest parvaof Malayalam poetry. Sugathakumari has no poetic life severed from nature. Most of the poems of the poet, who considers human onslaughts on nature as unpardonable sins, are lullabies for nature. She can never compromise with anything which is destructive to nature.

In the modern era, mechanical life and urbanity severed off the relation between humans and nature. Nature and consumer culture are poles apart. Everything turns turtle when humans lose the awareness that the resources of nature are not unlimited and they should be spared for posterity. Writers' responses grew stronger when environmental issues started threatening human life. The Silent Valley agitations which gathered momentum since 1972 made ripples in Malayalam poetry too. It was the heyday of environmental poetry. In 1980, a group of poets came forward for the first time in history as a nature conservation collective in Kerala. During that time, O.N.V Kurupp, N.V Krishnavarrier, Ayyappapanikar, Kadamanitta, Sugathakumari, VishnnarayananNambuthir—Poets with disparate political views, came together for a common cause. This amity gave rise to a new sensibility in Malayalam poetry. A new poetry collection titled, Vanaparvamwas published in 1983. G. Sankarapilla, Sachithanandan, D. Vinayachandran, A. Ayyappan, V. Madhusoodanan, DesamangaamRamakrishnan, Ezhacherry Ramachandran, KurippuzhaSrikumar, S. Joseph, et all came forward with poems exhorting environmental conservation.

Malayalam novels maintained a close tie with nature from their very start. Writers like Thakazhy showed the aesthetics of man-nature coexistence; they did not portray the scenes of nature's fury against humans. In Thakazhi's works the readers experience rivers, paddy fields, and time blended in farm lands. The way Kuttanadu is an overwhelming presence in Randidangazhy, sea envelops Chemmeen. While ThottiyudeMakan presents life in the margins of Alappuzha town, Thendivargamdepicts the nomadic life of the disenfranchised class.

Novelists of the modern period were influenced by the global awareness about environmental issues. The wide canvas of the novel gave enough leeway for the discussion of environmental problems. The works of O.V. Vijayan, Anand, C.Radhakrishnan, Kovilanel all stand out in this regard. O.V Vijayan, in his Gurusagaram, portrayed Kunjuni who returns from great cities and war cites to experience the cool breeze under the mango tree and jack tree of his ancestral family on the shores of Thoothappzha. Anand'sMarubhoomikalUndakunnath draws the grim picture of the human psyche turning into deserts owing to humanmechanicality and consumerism. Anand also presents a vision of crowds becoming forest and nature. C.Radhakrishnan's novels such as MunneparakkunnaPakshikal presents environmental issues vividly. The novelist has succeeded in identifying the wounds science has inflicted upon nature. Kovilan's novels set in Himalaya, war sites and coal mines find great pleasure in topographical descriptions. Unique natural milieus are portrayed by K.J Baby's Mavelimantam and Narayan's Kocharethi. Sara Joseph's AlahayudePenmakkaldepicts the lives of the subaltern class and their culture.

This is an accursed age in which the earth is turning sterile from poisoning. Water bodies are contaminated and poisoned. Even the air we breathe has become toxic and is a vector of maladies. The mesmerizing jingle of coins tempt humans into felling trees. Everywhere huge, luxurious concrete forests are erected. In such a juncture, a writer is morally bound to use his pen for the sake of the environment. No writer who dreams of a world where love flows freely like music can neglect this task.

Reference

- 1.Kiran B. Chokker(Editor),Paristhithiya Manasilakkam,2013,D.C.Books, Kottayam.
- 2.G.Madhusoothanan(Editor),Haritha Niroopanam Malayalathil,2002,Current Books,Thrissur.
- 3.S.Rajasekharen,Paristhithidersanam Malayala Kavithayil,2010,Kerala Language Institute,Trivandrum.
- 4.G.Mathusoothanan,Bhavukathuam 21-)oNoottandil,2009,Current Books,Kottayam.
- 5.G.Mathusoothanan,Kathayum Paristhithiyum,2011,Current Books, Kottayam.

