



Ecocritical Readings

Nature and Environment in
Humanities

Saran S. & Mayurakshi Mitra

Ecocriticism is an inclusionary term that is most commonly used to refer to environmentally oriented study of literature, art and other media. Life with the harmony of nature and environment is an integral part of human life. Many ancient cultures have advocated life in harmony with environment. Many of the rituals i.e. the worship of trees, animals, forests, rivers, and the sun, and considering the earth itself as Mother Goddess may seem meaningless in this modern era. But these rituals and culture have connected humans with environment from ancient ages. It tries to bring a balance between shallow ecology or anthropocentric approach that advocates conservation of nature and natural resources as against deep ecology that advocates preservation of nature. In the last few decades, this theory has grabbed the attention of scholars and has proved itself to be an interesting field of investigation in literature. It becomes essential to the human being, as the readers of literature, to know the theory and the various fields involved in it. Human life can neither be away from the environment nor from the literature. The theory 'ecocriticism' reflects on the relationship between environment and human life.

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Edit Academic
May 2021

Price Rs 650.00
ISBN 978-1-63904-406-1



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Screening the Green : Ecocritical Rereading of the Malayalam Film *Lord Livingstone* 7000 Kandi

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Abstract

Humanity's attempt to define nature has consistently resulted in nature's tendency to slip away and evade definition. Indeed, the complexity of the word is showcased by the several problems which arise the instant we attempt to define it: Is it necessary to come to an objective definition of nature? Is it possible to live in harmony with nature? What does it mean to live in harmony with nature? Are humans a part of, or apart from, nature? These are some of the questions with which artists have grappled, especially, more recently, in film. Thus, it is with film's recent interest in humanity's relationship with nature that this paper attempts to explore these questions by offering an Eco critical reading of Anil Radhakrishnan Menon's film, *Lord Livingstone 7000 Kandi*.

When the environment is representing on film, it appears that what concerns the ecocritic is not only the issue of whether or not the environment is given as much importance as the human characters, but also the issue of the authenticity of the environment that is being represented .

Key words: Ecocriticism, Anthropocentrism, Bio regionalism, Defamiliarisation and Green screen

For what is nature? Nature is no great mother who has borne us. She is our creation. It is in our brain that she quickens to life. Things are because we see them, and what we see, and how we see it, depends on the arts that have influenced us. To look at a thing

is very different from seeing a thing. One does not see anything until one sees its beauty. Then, and only then, does it come into existence (Wilde 27).

Nature is one of the greatest living poems. It is a poem because it lends itself to multiple and often controversial interpretations. There are certainly several repercussions that arise when assigning a particular and idiosyncratic definition to 'nature', a consequence which does not escape the artists under scrutiny. Thus, when providing their own definition of nature, each artist also illustrates what it means to 'immerse oneself into nature', to 'live closer to nature', or, to use a phrase which appears throughout my dissertation, 'to establish better interconnections between humanity and nature'. These are phrases which are as difficult to define as nature itself, mainly because they rely on a definition of nature to make sense. One of the findings that presents itself in analysing these texts is that part of the difficulty in defining nature and all related terms comes from the fact that the definition of nature is culturally determined. Thus, in the process of providing a definition of nature, each culture does so by negotiating their placement on the nature-human continuum, if, indeed, we are to assume that nature and humans fall on opposite ends of the same scale. That we may conclude that nature is culturally determined comes mainly from the fact that every culture views nature in a different way.

In her book *What is Nature?*, Kate Soper provides an extensive and full account of the history of the perception of nature. One the major conclusions Soper reaches upon examining the trajectory of western perceptions of nature is that definitions of nature, while determined by culture, are simultaneously determined by changing times, as we find that while Karl Marx thought nature to be anything that remains untouched by human hands, a definition which becomes increasingly problematic as the earth's last unexplored spots rapidly disappear, the original pre-Socratic Greek definition of nature purported nature to be everything that existed. Coates highlights the problems of this original Greek definition of

nature, stating that if we are to believe it, then, strictly speaking, nothing can be unnatural. However, the distinction between the natural and the unnatural (or artificial) is invariably made and, while nature has no conceptual opposite, we usually think of it as human culture. Indeed, without a concept of culture as the works of humankind, there can be no concept of nature.

It is Coates's last point which illustrates the futility in any attempt to define nature objectively. However, that nature is the central theme of this work necessitates some definition of nature for the purposes of pragmatism. It is for this reason that I will utilise the definition of nature provided by Raymond Williams, who defines nature in terms that are broad enough to be practical. Thus, as Coates does, I will view humans and nature as two dichotomous entities, which may seem an imprudent assumption given that through the evolutionary process humans have, essentially, sprung from the loins of nature. Many critics would disagree with this distinction between humanity and nature, which is most clearly seen in the substitute names critics assign to the term 'nature'.

Ecocriticism is commonly defined as "the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment" (Glotfelty xviii). As one of the newest forms of literary criticism to emerge at the end of the twentieth century, ecocriticism was formalised as a literary theory in the late 1970s amidst concerns of human-induced environmental degradation, which has forced humans, especially artists, to re-evaluate their relationship with nature. Ecocriticism has since grown in areas previously untouched by literary theory. However, despite significant development within the last thirty years, ecocriticism still exhibits great potential for further growth and cultivation (Harrington and Tallmadge xv). An example of this would be the paucity of ecocritical theory which considers film as a medium of study. What would ecocriticism look like if tailored to the representation of nature in film, as opposed to the representation of nature in written text? How does representing nature in film inform or modify existing ecocritical premises? Further, and what is most important regarding the core concerns

of this dissertation, how might film influence our theorisation of anthropomorphism and anthropocentrism? These are some of the questions that will be considered for this dissertation, and this chapter more specifically. Certainly, ecocriticism has branched out into several factions, such as ecofeminism and deep ecology, both of which will be discussed in this chapter.

However, to determine other ways in which ecocriticism may develop, it is important that one is aware of ecocriticism's origins, and that I provide an evaluation and critique of these origins. William Rueckert, the first to coin the term 'ecocriticism' in his essay "Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism" (originally published in 1978), but by no means the first ecocritic, developed this landmark literary theory as a means to "experiment with the application of ecology and ecological concepts to the study of literature" (107). However, Rueckert's version of ecocriticism differs on quite a fundamental level when compared to how ecocriticism is currently used and understood. Rueckert seemed more concerned with reading texts as ecosystems, rather than reading texts about ecosystems, which is how ecocriticism is, to a large extent, practised today. Rueckert claims that poems "help to create creativity and community, and when their energy is released and flows out into others, to again raise matter from lower to higher order" (111). However, Rueckert's original conceptualisation of ecocriticism still shares commonalities with ecocriticism in its modern form. Rueckert was able to realise the importance of the pressing environmental matters that were, and still are, unavoidably linked to his theory: "Man's tragic flaw is his anthropocentric vision, and his compulsion to conquer, humanise, domesticate, violate, and exploit every natural thing."

THE WORLD OF CINEMA IN AN ECOCRITICAL PERSPECTIVE

Certainly, ecocriticism praises positive representations of nature in written texts, but Ivakhiv shows that reading only these qualities in texts, written or filmic, does a disservice both to the text being studied and the theory used to analyse that text. When giving an

ecocritical reading of a written text, one observes the manner in which the environment is portrayed, to what degree the characters and the author exhibit anthropocentric characteristics (and to what degree this may be seen as advantageous to our understanding of humans' relationship with nature), how human characters act upon, and react to, the environment, how the characters and authors use place and space, how, and to what degree, nature is anthropomorphised, and so forth. These are the same qualities which ought to be observed when giving an ecocritical reading of a film. However, we must be aware that these tropes may actualise themselves differently when presented in a different medium such as film.

When reading in written text about a horse, it is left to the reader to offer her own idea of what the horse looks like (provided no pictures accompany the text). When viewing a horse on screen, it is as if the horse becomes literalised for the viewer. This does not mean, however, that the horse depicted on screen is innocent of any kind of anthropomorphisation. It is apparent that the camera angle, soundtrack, the framing of the image, the colour palette, the movement of the camera, and so forth, are all contributing to the manner in which we view the horse, and is, therefore, not a horse divorced from deliberate human representation. It is a horse based on human interpretation. Thus, when giving an ecocritical reading of a filmic text, issues such as anthropomorphism are at play with consequences that must be considered in relation to the medium in which it is presented. Also, the appearance nature takes on film may be more potently anthropocentric when compared to its appearance in written text as the moving image gives one the impression of being more convincing and realistic. This may be because the thing being depicted on film is similar (in some respects) to the way in which we may view it in real life. The consequence of this is that the viewer may be more inclined to believe that she has exercised full control over nature, that she has, in some way, captured the essence of nature, a flawed belief given the high degree of manipulation and management that is present in

every frame of every film. Thus, issues such as anthropocentrism and anthropomorphism are apparent in both written and filmic texts, but mould themselves to the medium in which they are presented, forcing us to analyse them accordingly.

If eco criticism is to lend itself to the medium of film, another major trope that must be studied is the environment. Martin Lefebvre provides helpful definitions of setting and landscape as it pertains to film, showing, specifically, how the two differ. Landscape, as defined by Lefebvre, refers to an environment that is "freed from event hood". Landscape refers to an environment to which no human meaning has been assigned. This is much like ecocriticism's conceptualisation of space, which refers to an environment humanity has not yet defined. Setting, however, especially as it pertains to film, refers to "the place where the action or events occur" (Lefebvre 21), which, as we have seen with the definition of landscape, is quite closely linked to the ecocritical definition of place, which, contrasted to the definition of space, is an environment which has been given human meaning. Thus, in theorising about the environment, using ecocritical principles to analyse written texts and applying these principles to filmic texts is not an impossible academic pursuit. Further, when discussing issues pertaining to the environment, it is apparent that when comparing both kinds of media one uses terms that differ only in name and not in meaning.

In most examples of mainstream cinema, Lefebvre makes us aware, films relegate landscape to a backdrop to the action taking place. Notable exceptions to this in popular cinema include films such as *Lawrence of Arabia*, *Watership Down*, *WALL-E*, and *Blade Runner*. In Scott's *Blade Runner*, particularly, the director makes frequent use of lingering long-shots in which the human characters are dwarfed within their environment, implying, among other things, that the environment is unavoidably implicated in human existence, and will serve, to some degree, as a determining factor in the lives of the characters who inhabit it. These examples, however, are not representative of the whole of mainstream cinema in which

landscape becomes subservient to the purposes of narrative, and where no reference is made to the interconnected and reciprocal relationship between the two, or between landscape and the human and animal characters that are displayed on the screen. Allowing the environment to be as equally important as the characters in the film is rarely seen in cinema. When this occurs, the environment moves from the background to the foreground, an occurrence to which Lefebvre refers as the autonomy of the landscape, which occurs in at least two ways in cinema.

The first way in which the landscape can become, as Lefebvre puts it, autonomous, relies on the spectator's gaze, whereby, be it for a brief moment, the spectator recognises the landscape as separate from the narrative event. The second way in which a landscape can become autonomous is through the cinematographic medium, whereby landscapes are filmed in a manner which wilfully divorces them from the narrative. Time, it seems, is what determines the autonomy of a landscape, as autonomous landscapes, when represented in film, are subject to the temporality of the spectator's gaze as well as the temporality of the cinematographic medium. Landscapes remain autonomous for as long as the spectator recognises the landscape as autonomous while the particular scene lasts, and for as long as the camera wishes to have the landscape appear autonomous. Thus, if we are to distinguish an ecocriticism of written text from an ecocriticism of filmic text, especially as it pertains to the artistic representation of the environment, then what we find is that both favour texts in which the environment is elevated in the reader's (or viewer's) consciousness.

. All films, fiction or non-fiction, occur in some place, within some setting. Some films choose to, or are able to, use the real location depicted in the film, such as the Amazon jungle in Werner Herzog's *Fitzcarraldo*. However, I would imagine a director aiming to shoot her films on location would encounter great logistical problems if her story is set on, say Pluto, or in the human mind. Disregarding places that are difficult, or impossible, for a film crew

to film, there are certainly instances, perhaps for aesthetic or economic reasons, that a director may choose to film, not in the actual location represented in the film's narrative, but in a location similar to it.

Some films are able to elevate nature and the environment may be so, but we should also be aware how notoriously non-eco-friendly the production of films may be, explaining that films' reliance on a complex and integrated array of producers, artists, agents, actors, marketers, et al., an immense and sophisticated technological apparatus, colossal sums of money and capital, and the consumption of tremendous material resources (and production of waste) is unparalleled in all the arts. This raises the likely possibility of the counter productivity that may accompany films with the most honourable eco-friendly and anti-anthropocentric intentions. One would assume that a film with green intentions would exhibit a greater awareness of the logistical undertaking of its storytelling as it may contribute to the very ecological problems its narrative condemns, the effect of which is a polluted film disguised in green film's clothing (which may not necessarily be intentional, of course). However, the establishment of organisations such as the Environmental Media Association, founded in the 1980s to encourage more eco-friendly means of film production.

Certainly, films with an increased eco-conscience may be evaluated not only in terms of their production value, but also in the manner in which the camera is used. Indeed, we must be sensitive to representing nature in film as it may result in the domination of nature from the spectator. This may result from, either, the idea that the camera is inherently a domineering construct, or by the context of the film image. Susan Sontag raises a similar point by explaining how the camera acts as a mechanism of domination. Using Sontag's argument and applying it to the act of filming nature, Ross shows that camera technology can perhaps be seen as an embodiment of what ecologists have called the rationalist project of mastering, colonising, and dominating nature; a project whose

historical development now threatens the global ecology with an immediacy that is all the more ironically apparent to us through those very 'images of ecology' that have become standard media atrocity fare in recent years. Thus, Ross implies that it is particularly harmful when images of nature are depicted on film as it allows the viewer to read nature as a passive object of scrutiny that is at the mercy of the director's camera and, subsequently, the viewer's gaze. With nature cast in this light, it becomes easier for the director to read nature as she sees fit.

The consequence of this, in terms of anthropocentrism, and, especially, anthropomorphism, is that it presents a view of nature that is never innocent of interpretation and meaning. Nature can never, simply, be. That directors assign meaning onto nature can easily be seen in the fact that, for example, nearly all films about sharks depict these creatures as brutal monsters.

As the above discussion suggests, reading nature anthropomorphically is a characteristic not only of fiction films, but of documentary films as well. That most documentary films present footage, except footage that has clearly been re-enacted, as factual, may be so, but this does not exempt documentary films from manipulating images which may reflect the anthropocentric preoccupations of its director. Thus, when nature documentaries present nature to its audience, it may become apparent that what is being depicted is every bit a construction as a fiction film.

These general observations of the nature of an ecocriticism designed for reading film, known as celluloid ecocriticism, must only be taken as that: general. While what I have mapped out will be followed as guidelines, it must be made known that specific scenes in specific films may prove that these guidelines may not be generalised as easily as desired. Thus, no image exists in isolation, and to read an image in its entirety is to be aware of the context of the image. Therefore, the differences between 'ecocriticism proper' and celluloid ecocriticism lie mainly in the nature of the respective medium each literary theory holds under scrutiny, but both factions of ecocriticism are interested in the same principles when studying

a text: the author's awareness of place and space in her text, the manner in which the relationship between humans and nature is depicted, and, another of this dissertation's central concerns, the author's awareness of the degree and effect of her anthropocentric portrayal of nature, and the kind of anthropomorphism of nature the author portrays in her text. These ecocritical principles are applied not only in the different media for which ecocriticism is used, but are criticised and modified in other theory-based factions of ecocriticism as well. Two such theoretical factions are ecofeminism and deep ecology, two apples that have not fallen far from the ecocriticism tree, but far enough to be considered different – both from ecocriticism and from each other.

In her introduction to *The Ecocriticism Reader*, Cheryll Glotfelty (1996) suggested that the history of ecocriticism be considered in terms analogous to Elaine Showalter's three stages in the development of feminist criticism. First, in this scenario, comes the examination of 'images of nature' (or of women, in Showalter's account). Next comes the 'literary tradition' stage, which, for ecocritics, involves uncovering and revalorising the tradition of 'nature writing' and of fiction and poetry that illustrates 'ecological awareness'. Finally comes the 'theoretical' phase, which draws 'on a wide range of theories to raise fundamental questions' about the 'symbolic construction' of nature and the non-human world.

Ecocriticism has long pursued all three of these tasks, and has now spread well beyond its original home in literary studies. Film and visual media are among the growth industries for ecocriticism, and for 'green cultural studies' more broadly. It has been a little over a decade since the first book-length studies appeared that analysed cinematic representations of nature with an eye toward their ecological, in addition to their social, implications. While Mitman's (1999) and Bousé's (2000) studies of wildlife documentaries may not have set out explicitly to extend the boundaries of ecocriticism, the books that have followed in their wake have created a recognisable movement of 'ecocritical film studies', 'green film studies', 'ecomedia studies', 'ecocinecriticism'

or something of the sort. Most of these efforts fall into Glotfelty's and Showalter's first two stages: on the one hand, the 'images and representations' school of analysis; and, on the other hand, examination of genres or specific films that exemplify greater ecological consciousness than the norm. What has remained largely undeveloped is the third, 'theoretical' phase, though this has been changing recently.¹ There is arguably a further fourth phase, one in which the theorisation of ecological issues in relation to a given medium turns back on itself so as to place the very medium into question.

With writing, such self-reflexivity regarding the literary medium has not been common, since writing and publishing are seldom considered ecologically high-impact industries. With film, however, things are different, since it is difficult for an ecocritic not to note that the making of films carries ecological costs.

Thinking about films ecocritically involves not only examining representations of nature, or of human-nature relations, *within* films; it must also involve examine the film medium itself, including the production, distribution and consumption of films and the by-products generated at each step of this life cycle. In turn, literary ecocritics could learn from this approach.

Lawrence Buell views the growth of ecocriticism in the West in two phases, "the first wave" and the "second wave" ("Ecocriticism" 138). Practitioners ecocriticism's first wave focused on "romantic poetry and American nature writing" (Moellering 6) and analyzed literary texts with regard to their mere personalized/experiential content which probably began with the publication of Jonathan Bate's *Romantic Ecology* in 1991 and Buell's *The Environmental Imagination* in 1995 (see Garrard 360). The first wave includes humanist, anthropocentric, bio centric, and ecocentric ideologies. The second wave saw a shift of thrust from the rural to the urban and from nature to environment prompting the discipline to be socio centric. Bioregional, ecopolitical, and postcolonial theories were a vital part of this wave. In his "Ecocriticism: Some Emerging Trends," Buell offers analyses of the European, British, US-

American, Japanese, Chinese, and Indian schools of ecocriticism to invite ecocritics' attention to the ecocritical scope in so-called "third world" countries. I posit that it is in this context that Indian ecocriticism's history should be analysed. It is necessary to justify the soil metaphor used in the study at hand. Scott Slovic, Swarnalatha Rangarajan, and Vidya Sarveswaran although they critique Buell's "wave" metaphor as compartmentalization—use the same framework to describe the future directions of ecocriticism in the West in his "The Third Wave of Ecocriticism." My use of the soil metaphor is because it describes the different layers of soil such as "rockbed," "regolith," "subsoil," and "topsoil". The list of layers is in descending order. Rockbed is the base level soil and topsoil is the soil in the surface level of the earth. Nevertheless, the soil is a single unit, although comprising of different layers which have distinct characteristics. The soil allows water to permeate. Moreover, soil signifies permanence, base, life, and continuity.

In the pre-colonial era in India, societies were strongly influenced by eco-centric or bio-centric ideologies which emerged from the very many religions which originated in India and followed by the people of the nation. But in this age of modernization and globalization where newer forms of exploitations of nature occur, these eco-centric philosophies do not make an impact as these ideologies, "is of little use in understanding the dynamics of environmental degradation in modern India" (Gadgil & Guha 2013). Moreover, the environmentalism of the west is also of little help as it too prescribes the preservation and conservation over the needs of the poor masses.

Many experts had reiterated the fact that there is a major difference between the first world environmentalism and third world environmentalism, or in other words, environmentalism of the rich is different from environmentalism of the poor. For the rich, it is about raising their standards of living, but for the poor it is about survival as their existence depended on nature and its resources (Guha & Gadgil 1994). For example, historians of environmentalism call western environmentalism as a 'full

stomach' phenomenon, as economic affluence leads to the desire to enjoy the beauty of wilderness areas and clean air comes to be cherished, once basic material needs have been fulfilled (Nash 1982) (Guha & Gadgil 1994).

For third world nations, environmentalism is about survival and not a luxury. The people depend on nature and natural resources for their livelihood. For example, villagers depend on forests for firewood, fodder for their cattle and produce of the forest for food and income. So logging and denuding the forest means loss of livelihood and their survival becomes a question. As the noted environmental scientist and editor of the magazine "Down to Earth" Sunita Narain says, Indian environmentalism essentially can be called as 'utilitarian conservationism' as it was not born out of the need to conserve nature for nature per se, but for its value as a resource to people who depend on it (Narain 2012). But even within India, given the understanding that it is a land of contradictions and diversity, there are vast differences in the environmental ideologies people from various backgrounds ascribe to.

The rich, the business community, the urban can be slotted as pro development and industrialization orientated against the poor, who have protested against many development projects in view of their utilitarian conservationism ideals. Major site for conflicts on environment were on government funded projects like building dams, commissioning nuclear power plants, setting up factories in forest areas and in coastal zones with local communities protesting vehemently and sometimes violently in their desperate attempt to continue their lives in their ancestral lands. Western nations have invested heavily on technology, innovations and science in natural resource management and also with stringent enforcement of laws have ensured that industrialisation in these countries do not have the same consequences as in other poor nations. In poor nations, science or scientists have a lesser say in environmental movements, rather it is the ordinary people, whose livelihood is challenged by industrialization, who form the protest groups (Guha

& Gadgil 1994). Hence, in the west, people approach the courts and law enforcement agencies for environmental violations, but in the poor nations, protests are inspired and guided by principles from spirituality and religion.

Ecocriticism in visual arts especially cinema resorts to certain tropes. The reliance on tropes or metaphorical imagination that operates on ecology brings the focus on the technical aspects of the cinema, because like painting cinema is also an artistic medium. When viewed as a medium, the question of representation becomes a vital one. Art is a representation of reality. What is the process that takes place in representing something? When we represent something we make it into an image. What we see outside is an object, but if we take a photograph of the object or make a painting it becomes an image. So naturally cinematic representation, like all other representations is based on images.

When speaking about the ecological issues portrayed in cinema we will have to speak on the visual images that a film maker uses. The transformation of an object into an image is a complicated aesthetic process, because it may involve defamiliarisation of the object or its alienation. An aesthetic distancing may be established between the real world and the object represented. This is especially important in the portrayal of ecological disasters. The real experience of watching a flood or a tsunami and visual experience on a cine screen may be two varied experiences for a viewer. When ecological issues are portrayed in cinema there is a physical distancing. It becomes more problematic if we take into consideration the point of view of the film maker. A film maker will have to resort to certain artistic strategies while portraying a scene: he will take a close up, or he may take medium or long shots as the portrayal demands. These technicalities highlight the problem of representation. The film maker may resort to several artistic strategies in order to create a spectacle. Between a disaster and its representation there is always the possibility of a spectacle and that cannot be avoided.

There are several instances where British Petroleum Companies have sponsored documentaries of ecological issues. Critics have called it "green wash," which is a kind of eye wash in which the people who destroy ecology gives the impression that they are its greatest preservers. Ecology and cinema cannot be treated as isolated genres, because we will have to take into consideration the issue of spectacle and the market considerations that work as a motive behind film making. The theoretical aspects of film making also comes into focus when we start discussing the representation of ecology. There are ways in which fictionism and voyeurism can operate in cinema. For example when a film maker portrays the aborigines, he will have to resort to certain clippings in which he will show their private life in a pseudo-demographic way.

When you study the camera work, you may understand that the camera is resorting to what Laura Mulvey and other feminists speak about a kind of voyeuristic gaze. In fact the feminist ecocritics point to the fact that majority of the political cinema resort to a kind of colonial hangover, in which they employ an overt masculine gaze over the female. In ecological cinema nature become a prominent theme and when looked from the point of view of gaze, a masculine gaze is directed on nature that is remarkably feminist. There are certain tropes on which eco-cine criticism operates. One major trope is the pastoral. The trope of the pastoral has primarily three inflections. One it can take an elegiac trope. It takes into consideration a vanished past, for example a pristine forest. The second inflection is that of a romantic idol.

Landscape can be portrayed as a sort of escape from all the urban problems. Third one is a Utopian concept. So depending on the past it can be elegiac, depending on the present it can be idol, or depending on future it can be Utopian. But in all these inflections or the tropes there is portrayal of landscape and nature and also memory plays a vital role.

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and for 'green cultural studies' more broadly. It has been a little over a decade since the first book-length studies appeared that analysed cinematic representations of nature with an eye toward their ecological, in addition to their social, implications. While Mitman's (1999) and Bousé's (2000) studies of wildlife documentaries may not have set out explicitly to extend the boundaries of ecocriticism, the books that have followed in their wake have created a recognisable movement of 'ecocritical film studies', 'green film studies', 'ecomedia studies', 'ecocinecriticism' or something of the sort. Most of these efforts fall into Glotfelty's and Showalter's first two stages: on the one hand, the 'images and representations' school of analysis; and, on the other hand, examination of genres or specific films that exemplify greater ecological consciousness than the norm. What has remained largely undeveloped is the third, 'theoretical' phase, though this has been changing recently.¹ There is arguably a further fourth phase, one in which the theorisation of ecological issues in relation to a given medium turns back on itself so as to place the very medium into question. With writing, such self-reflexivity regarding the literary medium has not been common, since writing and publishing are seldom considered ecologically high-impact industries.

With film, however, things are different, since it is difficult for an ecocritic not to note that the making of films carries ecological costs. Thinking about films ecocritically involves not only examining representations of nature, or of human-nature relations, *within* films; it must also involve examine the film medium itself, including the production, distribution and consumption of films and the by-products generated at each step of this life cycle. In turn, literary ecocritics could learn from this approach.

Since its emergence as an industry, cinema has been almost exclusively an urban art form and has served and continues to serve audiences, which are predominantly urban. This means that most of the cinema audiences have a limited scope of knowledge and first-hand experience regarding nature. In current Western (post)modern society, which relies on completely outsourced or

minute agricultural work force, the alienation from real nature becomes more and more comprehensive. In this situation, cinema and other audio-visual media have a key role in representing nature for us, the audiences, and in shaping of our views about it. This is one of the reasons why the research of nature and cinema is important, and gives rise to some central questions, such as: how does cinema shape and aestheticize nature? What kind of conventions, patterns and trends does it adhere to? And simply, what are understood as representations of nature on film?

Although there is no consensus on what is the precise definition of ecocriticism, there seems to be a general agreement that it contains three main focal points. These are the investigation of relationship between literature and nature, the search for interdisciplinary connections and synergies between different fields of knowledge engaged in the study of nature, and affirmative, positive politics, that is, environmentalist ethos that frames and inspires the research (Estok 2001). The first two can easily be transferred to the study of cinema, while the third probably emerges automatically in one shape or another as an inevitable by-product of hermeneutic process of interpretation. Linked to this vague terminology is another issue concerning some ecocritics, namely that of missing theoretical identity, or as Estok puts it, "we need to understand why ecocriticism has problems in getting its theoretical footing." As compared to, say, marxism, ecocriticism lacks a theoretical tradition and clearly formed basic, core assumptions, which could help bring the field into focus.

Thus, there has been some questioning as to what extent ecocriticism is a theoretical formation, a bunch of methodological tools or just a focus (Estok 2001). For me, and for the purposes of this essay, this question is a non-starter. To fulfil the three criteria mentioned above and to be useful, an ecocritical approach does not have to form a solid theoretical structure. A collection of piecemeal, small-to-medium-sized theories and methods that effectively explain some small-to-medium-sized problems can do the trick just as well. In fact, it can be argued that this is actually the best way

of tackling such complex and multifarious phenomenon as cinema, since it avoids the strictures and maxims of an over-arching theory and the pre-determination and homogenisation that it can impose on any given source material or data.

LORD LIVINGSTONE 7000 KANDI: AN ODE TO NATURE

The term 'green screen' has become very popular, now a day, in film studies. Another phrase, 'eco-cinema' also has become common in academia. These terms reflect the concerns of environment portrayed in movies. Wild life movies, documentaries of travel and tourism are mainly raising the issues of ecology and environment and have a sumptuous size of viewers. Though, with the very beginning of the cinema, in the last decade of the 20th century, depiction of nature and environment were very common.

Film studies, generally, are confined to the analysis and evaluation of movies. This evaluation is may be done on the basis of socio-political and economic criteria or some times ,the production techniques, the storyline, the theme and the roles played by the actresses and actors also play a major role to weight the film. There are theories to analyse movies and they provide various parameters for the judgment of movies. Scholars and cine-critics have substantiated these theories with their opinions and empirical studies. Cinematic studies also focus on these theoretical aspects while evaluating the films. The issue of environment in cinema started gaining momentum in recent years only. It is an issue related to industrialization, urbanization and many other things.

Though, in films, portrayal of the nature, landscapes and wildlife are mainly analysed to relate it to the environment. However, many studies show that the process of film production and exhibition is creating a lot of concerns to environmental issues in itself. And this fact is completely ignored when scholars debate and deliberate on the topic of environment and cinema.

Feature films do not raise the issues and environmental problems directly, but, as this discussion suggests, they create more powerful impact in the minds of viewers. Though, the making of films, simultaneously, raising much concern for the environment

and nature. The film industry, while creating a message for environmental protection, should be cautious for the same.

Nature, in all its glory – verdant, green and mysterious, is the hero of Anil Radhakrishnan Menon's film, *Lord Livingstone 7000 Kandi* (LL7K). The frame in this film encompasses spaces vaster than before and it gives the impression of Nature as an entity, of forests and adventure.

Cinema here, is a tool of protest. LL7K is him raising his voice for Nature – against deforestation, against the abuse of its resources, the forests and its ecosystems. Livingstone is a name he likes and kandi is a measure of land. Not derogatory. It is around 25 hectares or 60-odd acres. 7000 Kandi is the name of the fictional village where the film is set. This fictional village was a set created in the forest by art director Jothish Shankar, without causing too much harm to the flora and fauna of the forest, in keeping with the spirit of the film.

The film has the pattern of an Anil Radhakrishnan Menon film – a group of strangers drawn together by a common cause. What, therefore, ties a chemical engineer, an adventure junkie, a research analyst, a retired IAS officer, a street magician, a professor, a forest guide and one Philipose John Varkey? The film is not about just eight characters. There are 100 plus people/characters in the film, and it is about all of them. The film, though set in contemporary times, has several elements and traverses 500 years. The idea, as with his other films, originated with one character – in this case the one essayed by Reenu Mathews. A chat with the actor led to the character, Madhumita, a research analyst, and the plot and the environment evolved from that character. The film is a fantasy; but given the audience response to fantastic subjects, he says he hasn't gone overboard with the fantasy part and kept it real.

Nature-loving David takes on a Goliath kind of multi-national corporation, which is hell bent on shaving off hectares of forest land and looting the resources there. This premise holds a lot of promise but interest starts to wane once the story unfolds. Environmentalist Philipose John Varkey (Kunchacko Boban) sends

letters to random people, inviting them to spend a few days in the wild with him, and help him save the jungles from destruction. Six respond to his invite, and reach the place mentioned in the letter.

CKAK Menon (Nedumudi Venu) is a retired IAS officer, who is living out his life in an old age home. Professor Neelakandan (Chemban Vinod Jose, with an unkempt wig and ponytail) is a Zoology professor, who has a PhD in animal excreta and cannot have a conversation without mentioning favourite subject. Madhumita (Reenu Mathews) is a gun-testing expert.

Shanmughan Ilangovan (Bharath) is an adventure junkie and an outdoor person, who has been afflicted with the same ailment that renowned astrophysicist Stephen Hawking has. He has been given six months to survive by the medical professionals. Ananthakrishnan Iyer (Jacob Gregory) is a chemical engineer, who is doing research on plants responding to human thoughts.

Beeran (Sunny Wayne) is a street magician. They walk for days in the jungle with the help of a guide Malavedan (Sudheer Karamana) to reach Philipose. The trek through the visually enticing forest tests one's patience as we wait for the actual film to begin after the protagonist's appearance.

We soon learn about their task -- there is an ancient tribal village in the middle of the thick forest, which is self-sustained and has no contact with the outside world. This village's existence is under threat as Lord Livingstone Corporation, which has the lease of the jungle, has discovered rich deposits of minerals in the area and are clearing the area for this bounty. So Philipose calls upon this team to help him rescue this heritage and the greenery by putting their expertise to use.

Philipose John Varkey the Nature Enthusiast send letters to 100 people to save an unknown tribal village called '7000 Kandi'. Different people came, some of them returned because they came to know the Village is haunted. But 6 people (Shanmughan Ilangovan, Madhumita Krishnan, C. K. A. K. Menon, Beeran, Prof. N. Neelakandan, and Ananthakrishnan Iyer) came to the village with the help of Malavedan. Philipose reveals them about a treaty

between a land lord and Livingston company 150 years ago. As per treaty the company has the authority to making the forest an industrial area or a plantation for next 150 years. If they fail then the forest goes to government of India. If they succeed in the mission then they can extend the validity to 350 more years. And now the company aware about some rare eart minerals belongs there and they want to explore it. So they appoint Bangalore brother to cut down the trees. Philipose convince others about the importance of saving 7000kandi village and the tribe who were mistaken as ghost by the natives. Now with the help of 6members Philipose and the tribals try to stop the bangalore brothers. They succeed in the mission and Bangalore brothers left the place intact. But later it reveals that the treaty is valid for four months too and the mission was now handover to an international firm and the tribals should fight with the company to live in their own land and the film ends with Philipose, tribals and the invited are fighting against the company.

The initial half of the movie takes the audience on a mystical journey through lush green forests, emerald lakes, swift rapids, dark caves and misty hills. It's also where the movie connects with viewers the most. Anil's third movie sees him expanding the canvas, focusing on society and its duty to conserve nature. The movie starts off with nature enthusiast Philipose John Varkey assembling a motley crew of six people and trekking to a meeting point known as 7000 Kandi.

Once there, Philipose informs them about a 500-year-old civilization that exists deep inside the forest and how an industrial corporation plans to level the entire area for precious minerals, in the process of which they would wipe out the livelihood of the villagers.

Despite its visual brilliance, the film's narrative falls flat in the second half when the villagers fail to receive due importance. Though there are occasional flashes of ingenuity in the way the group devises and executes their plans to scare off the corporation, it doesn't quite deliver in terms of impact.

LL7K is a movie that is technically brilliant, visually magnificent and ably acted, but fails to engage the audience due to its predictable and lukewarm narrative.

CONCLUSION

The dissertation examines the concept of nature. It examines human perception of wilderness. It presents environmental issues as discussed in films. Man lives in the kingdom of nature. Human beings interact with the nature. The relationship between human life and nature is organic. We cannot live outside Nature. We breathe the air, we drink the water, we eat the food, we get the inspiration from nature, we are grateful to Nature. If the environment degrades, there is the negative impact on the health of the people.

Man has also influenced Nature tremendously. Human culture and civilization developed on the strong foundation of Nature. In the beginning Man was completely dependent on the natural resources for the livelihood. Man has made progress and evolved as the best creation of the Nature. Biogenetic and abiogenetic factors have contributed to the change in the biosphere. The third factor of techno genetic influence has been breaking down the relationship between human and nonhuman life. The problem of availability of fresh water has become acute. The problem of eliminating industrial waste has become a chronic problem before the human civilization. Nature is delicate and complex. We must plan to moderate the evil effects of technology on Nature. In socialist societies the problem of environmental destruction is solved by undertaking planned development.

There is the close relationship between human life and nature, and it reflects in literature. There is the connection between the environment in which we live and our creativity. Our consciousness is bounded and delimited by our materiality. Literature is studies for the insights into the human nature. Ecocriticism constructs bridges across the abyss between the two cultures of science and humanities. It challenges anthropocentrism. We must establish creative relationshipsto

animals. The deepest commitment of ecocriticism is to the notion of place or locale.

Ecocriticism is engaged with the mainstream film. It has analysed movies thematically, in the same manner of analyzing a literary text. The material, social and perceptual ecology of every film has been analysed by the ecocritics. Ecocritics examine the direct and indirect environmental impact of a particular production. They consider its political and cultural impacts. Perceptual ecology deals with the production of places and non-human life forms.

Ecocriticism is one of the important theories in the twenty first century. It also deals with the issues of social justice and equity. Nature matters for the survival and development of human and non-human life. We should realize that human life is embedded in the environment. All organisms including human life are part of a larger biotic web or network of community whose interest must constrain or direct or govern the human interest. Ecocriticism might also provide the foundation for reorganization of political, economic, cultural and social life. Ecocriticism has strengthened the close association of human life and nature. It asks the elemental questions of ourselves and literature.

Ecocritics perceive world as an evolutionary ecosystem in which line of connections extend to all directions. Different creatures and elements are reshaping the world they inhabit –their local ecosystem and beyond it the global ecosystem or biosphere. Ecological approach to culture explores the interconnection between the human life and the physical life. Ecocriticism is an environmentalist version of English studies. It is quite well established and has been developing since the 1990s. Ecocritics follow other political forms of criticism in formulating new critical criteria. They reinterpret and re-evaluate canonical texts according to those criteria. They analyse the concepts such as 'nature', 'wilderness', 'humanity', 'the animal', and 'progress.' Attitudes are originated in culture. Attitude has been largely responsible for the present ecological crisis. Ecocritics explore the ecological, political

and emotional ramifications of the environmental crisis. They develop future environmental scenarios.

Ecocriticism aims to enhance the values of the human communities and the natural world. All life is precious, human and nonhuman life. We are the part of the natural world. Human life flourishes within the intricate and interdependent web or network of life. Political pollution of corruption is an evil responsible for damaging the earth's life support systems and human life. The promotion of justice and protection of the environment are interdependent. Ecocriticism explores the issues of social and environmental justice. It is prominent critical theory in literature.

We must develop a responsible approach to the environment. We must take bold, visionary steps to confront the environmental crisis. If we do not address the problem of crisis adequately, future generations will not forgive us. We should not assume that everything in nature is limitless and free. We should bring transformation in our thoughts and behaviour to the extent necessary to save the environment. Some self interested cynics tell that global warming is not a problem. Civilisation has now reached mature configuration. The people who have the vested interests in the status quo, do not want to bring a meaningful change. Institutions like family are uprooted. We must preserve the values which nurture our concern for future.

Environmentally appropriate technologies will be of immense help in the achievement of sustainable development. Ecologically destructive technologies in use should be replaced. Technology alone is not the solution over the ecological problems. We should understand both the potential and danger of technology. Simply more technology addition will degrade the problem. We should redefine our relationship to the environment. Crisis can be solved if we approach it holistically. Problems are related to one another. Education programme, economic, social and political inclusion of the people will largely help to address problem of environmental crisis.

Healing the environment represents a renewed dedication to the universal inalienable rights, life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. The real enemy is the dysfunctional way of thinking. Alienation and technology go together. The new ideology of consumption collapses the individual into the desire for what they consume. It fosters the assumption that we are separate from the earth. It is this eccentric and destructive way of thinking about our relationship to the nature is our real enemy. To save environment is to protect true freedom and human dignity. National governments should show deep respect for the political and economic freedom of the individuals.

The film raises the environmental issue namely the deforestation and exploitation toward nature, which representing in this film through the fight portrayed between the nature lovers and the money lovers. In addition, there are also elements of thought where the human should be responsible for protecting and preserving the nature. By recognising the problem, human should do something by first of all aware that human and nature are bonded and need each other. Any form of exploitation will ruin the relationship and cause the imbalance in the world. We used to watch news where natural disasters happened everywhere around the world such as flood, the increasing temperature of the earth and so on where if we are tracking the source of the problem, it is all because of human. What did human do will usually paid back by nature and if we are not going to stop what we did now, there will be no future for both human and nature.

In this film the exploitative side of human are willing to sacrifice everything to get a new land because they do not have anything left. The main problem is actually when they start to have greedy ambition and being blinded by it. Human also like that, exploiting the nature, to gain profit, to more profit they gain, the more greedily they are. More forest will be exploited until there is nothing left and finally lead to human own destruction.

The environmental issue in this film is obvious; the exploitations of nature that lead to the ruin of the fictional village 7000 Kandi.

The relationship between human and nature also shown through the nature that asks for help because it can never longer stand for human action where if it is going further, human also eventually will die also. Therefore, it is human responsibility for nurturing the nature, not exploit it and that was the very obvious message from this film to the audience. We can also see that the role of pop culture plays an important part in delivering the message, through the film. Watching film using the ecocritics lens raise our consciousness about nature and it is very important nowadays since the earth is quite "sick" now. We should do something about that by first aware about the environment issue and then take action to protect and preserve the harmony between human and nature.

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Ecocriticism is an inclusionary term that is most commonly used to refer to environmentally oriented study of literature, art and other media. Life with the harmony of nature and environment is an integral part of human life. Many ancient cultures have advocated life in harmony with environment. Many of the rituals i.e. the worship of trees, animals, forests, rivers, and the sun, and considering the earth itself as Mother Goddess may seem meaningless in this modern era. But these rituals and culture have connected humans with environment from ancient ages. It tries to bring a balance between shallow ecology or anthropocentric approach that advocates conservation of nature and natural resources as against deep ecology that advocates preservation of nature. In the last few decades, this theory has grabbed the attention of scholars and has proved itself to be an interesting field of investigation in literature. It becomes essential to the human being, as the readers of literature, to know the theory and the various fields involved in it. Human life can neither be away from the environment nor from the literature. The theory 'ecocriticism' reflects on the relationship between environment and human life.

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Edit Academic
May 2021

Price Rs 650.00
ISBN 978-1-63904-406-1



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