



A STUDY OF ECOLOGICAL MARXISM OF THE SELECT NOVELS OF KAMALA MARKANDAYA

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ABSTRACT

This chapter examines Kamala Markandaya's Ecological Marxism informing NS, TCD, and PC. The purpose of this chapter is to highlight the negative impacts of industrial capitalism on the environment and the underprivileged by citing specific examples and situations. Economic shifts are evident even in his early works. Ecological Marx, writing in his 1867 book *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, explains how people have come to see the natural world as something of material worth. Mankind, he says, exerts its own natural forces in an effort to shape Nature's Materials to suit its own needs. Through this movement, people attempt to alter the external world while also altering their own selves. To describe the transfer of energy from people to their surroundings during work, Marx borrows the concept of Metabolism from German scientist Justus von Liebig and calls it *Stoffwechsel* (in German). In his writings, Karl Marx explains how the development of industrial society disrupts this metabolic process, leading to an increase in urban pollution and a depletion of natural resources. Marx says that when man alters his surroundings, he also alters his inner self. The natural world is seen as an alien force that must be tamed, loved, and respected. In his book *Seeking Awareness in American Nature Writing*, Scott Slovic takes the position that nature should be treated as a distinct entity. This perspective, however, shows how disconnected humans have become from the natural world.

KEYWORDS: Ecological Marxism, Kamala Markandaya, Political Economy, Nature's Materials

INTRODUCTION

The story of NS revolves on the ways in which Rukmani and Nathan are affected by industrial wealth and the Zamindari system. The tale opens with Rukmani living a traditional, mystical lifestyle, but this all changes when tanneries are built. The tanneries are symbols of corporate dominance. Nathan's in a tough position since he wants his boys to get experience in farming but they refuse to assist out in the fields. Difficulties in the workplace and a severe drought

Rukmani's life is plagued by calamity from beginning to end of the tale. Ira Kuti dies

of starvation after turning to prostitution after her crops fail, after Raja, one of her sons, is slain, and after she herself is attacked. After they default on their lease payments and the landowner sells the property to tanneries, the tenants are requested to leave the property. When Rukmani and Nathan need assistance from their son Murugan, they go to the city. After Nathan's death, they decide to abandon their quest for Murugan and go back to the hamlet. As previously mentioned, Rukmani and Puli have moved back in with Selvam and Ira. Her soul is fed by the landscape she sees. The bumps



on the road symbolize the ups and downs of her life, and the moment the cart comes to a stop, she can rest easy. In actuality, city life was highly unsettling and stressful, devouring her spouse and dreams, but she tells Selvam that his death was peaceful. She says she'll explain later, but the truth is that she doesn't want to think about the bad times she had in the city.

The India of today strikes a fine balance between the disciplined urbanity of art and the raw authenticity of rural life.

NS The couple had fruitful harvests in their first year of marriage. Nathan complains that their contented life is constantly disrupted by things like the encroachment of tanneries into their once peaceful village, which causes turmoil in their once peaceful lives and, ultimately, poverty, and by the alarming shift in her position in light of her helplessness in the face of change. Markandaya skillfully imbues her characters with foreboding of things to come. Markandaya quietly expresses her dissatisfaction with the changes brought about by the advent of industry in the peasants' daily life.

Nathan is a metaphor for the symbiotic relationship between farmers and the natural world in NS. Natha's devotion to caring for the land becomes stronger by the day. The main character talks about his job and how fulfilling it is in the same sentence. She explains how planting seeds strengthens the body and nurturing them develops the spirit. The topic and substance of NS is on transformation via technological progress. Without a rise in pay at the tanneries, Rukmani is not optimistic about the future of her profession. Semi-literate Rukmani explains how he has seen tanneries pollute

fields by releasing toxic chemicals into the air. In addition, flora is necessary for animal skin to be dyed in tanneries. As a consequence, people in the hamlet and its surroundings mistreat and murder animals. Tanning naturally pollutes the village's water, land, and air with its chemical waste. Through Arjun and Thambi, Rukmani describes how the underprivileged are forced to labor for low salaries. The fundamental topic of NS is the protagonists' gradual descent into a trap of poverty and debasement as a result of crop failure and the start of hunger.

Markandaya, like Marx and Foster, recognizes that nature is intrinsic to human cultures. This natural setting is provided as the setting against which the human world is seen. Markandaya stresses the importance of nature and urges readers to pay close attention to it at all times. Power of the socioeconomic system, as seen through Rukmani, may also have a negative impact on an individual's independence. When Arjun and Thambi go to find employment in Ceylon, the situation for the poor farmer family further worsens. They lose their other two boys, Raja and Kuti, to the hardships of poverty and hunger. The peasant family is forced to give up the land they are renting, whether by circumstance or the callousness of the landlord.

They had been farming there for many years and had become sentimental about it. The land is sold to tanneries since they can pay more for it. They send their third son, Murugan, to the city in the hopes that they might make a living there. They found out later that he had left his wife and gone to work in a quarry so that he wouldn't have to worry about supporting his now-dead wife. Nathan's death, the very embodiment



of love and life for Rukmani, is the culmination of her lengthy ordeal of deprivation and weariness in the city. It's important to understand how nature is formed in social fiction since it's such a crucial aspect of the human environment, even if the main purpose of the book is to put people's experiences with the natural world into perspective. Markandaya shapes the persona of an Indian peasant in the context of shifting economic and social conditions. The NS Universe

Tanneries rob rural communities of their land and means of subsistence. The tanneries are a symbol of capitalist power and the commodity status of human labor. The tanneries make indigenous' subjective culture more like the mainstream culture. Rukmani describes how, despite good intentions to encourage urbanization in rural India, industrial capital instead caused rural areas to regress and become more impoverished. The industrial capitalist social and economic revolution was the driving force behind urbanization, which had been a minority lifestyle since antiquity.

According to Marx and Engels, the process by which industrial capital alienates people from their natural and social environments is one of self-estrangement.

During the capitalist period, both and nature play crucial roles in the creation of prosperity. The literature of ecological marxism elaborates on how nature provides for human needs under capitalism. Mankind's needs may be met by either commercial production and sale or private consumption. The hypothesis highlights the role that human interaction with nature plays in the creation of wealth throughout the capitalist age. Further

anarchy among society's underdogs is sown by class distinctions.

Marx explains in *Capital* how the expansion of industry drives up production costs for the benefit of the capitalist class. The resulting stratification of society is not a natural consequence of increased output. According to Marx, the connection between nature and humans in terms of production should be seen as one mediated by society. Marx outlines how capitalists' embrace of materialism influenced their perception of nature as separate from society. In the process of extracting natural resources, Marx argues in *Capital*, humans alter not just their environment but also their own character (namely, they become more materialistic and selfish). Only by cooperating in a predetermined manner and exchanging roles can they produce anything. Marx argues that society shapes an individual to fit its needs. Overpopulation in cities and widespread poverty in rural areas result from the forcible relocation of workers to cities. Ecological Marxists argue that the root of the current socio-ecological problem can be traced back to humankind's anthropocentric perspective and materialistic use of the planet's natural resources.

ECOLOGICAL MARXISM

Markandaya explains how the people in her stories use the land. She discusses how people's perspectives have changed as industrial capital has developed. The oppressed are born into a society where they have no option but to shoulder the responsibilities of a position they did not earn. They see modern technology and industry coming up to them and leaving them behind.



At first, Ira plays the role of the compliant daughter. Her ironic feeling of obligation to her family causes her to rebel against traditional standards of morality in the face of the anguish of famine and the sight of starving. She has to prostitute herself to help her brother financially.

Markandaya explains how, in reality, there are no boundaries between personal agency and accountability. They have banded together in an attempt at violent protest against the social and economic conditions. Sometimes the line between revolt and accountability is unclear due to the inherent unfairness of the situation. After a period of mute, impotent protest against the ever-shifting economic circumstances she can do nothing to alter, Rukmani eventually gives in. Ira's response is rebellious as she takes on her duties.

The act of immorality is stamped with a stigma. A symbol is born in the form of an albino kid. Even if we have the ability to make our own decisions, we are also saddled with an overwhelming sense of grave obligation that supersedes all others. There is a fine line between the novelist's obligation to Ira and the death of acceptance of her place in life. The tanneries have become symbols of industrial materialism and social decay in India. The figures of elderly Granny and the village headman represent the change from a more traditional agricultural society to a more modern, materialistic one.

Markandaya creates tension by forcing her protagonists to decide between agricultural values and urban consumerism. Her works focus around the idea of change as a primary theme. The writer makes it clear that nature in all its forms—from bright sky to fragile trees to a brook—is an

integral component of the human experience. The writer presents the earth as a healing force that sustains human existence via its fertility. Nature is portrayed as a place where mysteries might be found that are inaccessible to humans. Therefore, learning about nature is the key to unlocking the mysteries of existence. According to Rukmani, the mystery of life was always wrapped up within the dry, hard pellets she grasped. Her enthusiasm heightened when the first little green leaves appeared on the seedlings.

Despite repeated manifestations and the inherent frailty of human life in the face of catastrophe, Rukmani insists that her awe remains. In Rukmani's internal monologue, the author explains. She also poignantly conveys the image of nature's wrath as relentless rains ruin the lives of peasants, washing away paddy in the corn fields and leaving many people without shelter. They had to constantly fight to stay alive. They start to feel the effects of hunger and disillusionment. Illustration of The writer in NS vividly portrays a scene that may be frequent in rural India today. The natural disasters threatened the village's hopes and worries. The story paints a moving picture of the destruction of rural America. The writer quietly reminds readers of the devastating potential of nature, urging them to keep nature in mind at all times. If people don't take responsibility, Markandaya is a reminder that nature may be ruthless with the tools at its disposal, revealing the futility of human effort. It is shown that a perspective of mutual respect is the basis for the existence of all living creatures in the cosmos.

The importance of human and animal communicative harmony is underlined. By describing the abuse to which animals are



exposed, Markandaya demonstrates the callousness of human beings. To survive at the tanneries, Abu has to be cruel to other animals, as Rukmani explains. Markandaya's exceptional knowledge of nature's variety and his ability to relate different human characteristics to those of a wide variety of species are both wonderfully conveyed in NS.

The devastating shock of being uprooted from one's home is shown via Nathan. This is inferred from Rukmani's complaint that the house, along with all of their memories, was going to be demolished since it was built on property that was not theirs. The episode exemplifies the ecological marxist concern for the oppression of the economically and socially disadvantaged. It seemed unfair to take away the land that meant so much to them. The rural people's devotion to their land (attachment of roots) is reflected in Rukmani's musings. In an effort to find acceptance, Rukmani and Nathan have reconciled on the farmland that was stolen from them to make space for tanneries.

human beings are motivated only by material gain and have no intention of protecting the cultural identities of those around them. Unfortunately, there doesn't seem to be any sign of Selvam in the city, and they were counting on him to help them survive. Their need for land and want to return to their home grew as their time in the city progressed. They can't afford to return home, so they're stuck working as quarry laborers to make ends meet. Nathan isn't really a character at all; he's more of a figure. He is portrayed as a hapless peasant, without economic independence, divided between his love for his family and the desire to exploit the poor.

MARXIST LITERATURE WITH AN ECOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

The writer reveals her keen awareness of natural beauty and subtlety. When we see nature as a living, breathing creature, we give it the ability to communicate its many. The work also has an air of the transcendental about it. Critics typically see TCD as a story about surviving in the face of an unstoppable technological juggernaut. The fight is occurring on two fronts: between British technologists and hill-tribesmen, and between technical might and nature.

Marxist literature with an ecological perspective illustrates how industrial capitalism contributed to environmental degradation. The workers were subjected to intensified exploitation, which fueled revolutionary enthusiasm among them. The book TCD serves as a projection screen for these thoughts. The events of TCD, first released in 1969, center around the building of a dam in Malnad. The novel's title alone conveys the idea. Helen, Indian hill tribesmen Krishnan, Bashiam, and the tribal chief play pivotal roles as the western engineering company sets out to construct the dam.

A settlement appears out of nowhere in the middle of the forest, and the residents of Maidan and the Malnad can't believe their eyes. This tribal community has been sleeping soundly for centuries, much like so many others in India. Up until this point, it had only been the whims of nature that had interrupted their existence, but now an external human agent in the form of a technological invasion had intervened. Initially, Clinton was diagnosed with il (Markandaya, 1969). Native hill tribesmen inhabit both the riverbanks and the cofferdams, which were constructed on the riverbed.



Tribal chiefs Krishnan and Shanmugham have both stated the locals' reverence for the river. Both life and death in TCD may be traced back to the river. Before the advent of industrialized capital, paddy fields relied on river water.

Markandaya uses stories to describe how Malnad's whole population would be swept away in a flood if the coffer dams are broken. The community is wrecked by the northwest monsoon. Nature is paramount, as stated by Barry Commoner in his third rule of ecology, and this is emphasized throughout the narrative. Commoner warns that imposing any form of significant change on natural systems is fraught with peril. It emphasizes the Ecological Marxist worry about industrial capital's purposeful traumatization of nature. Events in the story demonstrate how the environment is molded to facilitate industrial production.

Clinton, Rawlings, and Mackenderick ignore Krishnan's warnings that severe weather is expected in the area. The community is under danger due to the persistent monsoon rains and accompanying increase in water levels.

From a height of 3 to 5 or 8 feet. Once riding high and proud above the flow, the coffer's crest now seems less formidable. Neither did the canyoned riverbanks of the river. As the waves rose and engulfed the notches in the granite marking the inches, centimeters, yards, and meters by which they had evaluated their success, they claimed that their accomplishments had shrunk or vanished (Markandaya, 1969).

Dam building is hampered by river currents that are too turbulent. Clinton worries about monsoon storms because he can't predict the weather. Clinton cares more about the dams than the villagers. Clinton consults with the tribal head to

find out when the monsoon season will finish. On his deathbed, the chief gives an indication that the monsoon would end after the ridges have been removed. The novel's calamitous downpour finally ends towards its conclusion. Dams and village are spared. The following words in the book set the stage for the novel's central theme, the environment of techno-industrialization:

One year for the river to follow the new diversion channel. The year the coffer dams are built to hold it back. The main dam took two years to fill up between the vaults (Markandaya, 1969).

Marx's ideas on the consequences of industrial capital on the environment and the working class are represented in TCD in a number of different ways. Marx outlines how urban capital saw rural areas as fertile growth opportunities. Around the turn of the nineteenth century, capitalists began seeing rural villages as potential sites for economic development. Markandaya released TCD around this period. A gigantic dam, an icon of contemporary industrialism and technology, was built in the area where jackal cries had formerly been heard. The Western world's grunting technological wonders were the first to strip tribal people of their feeling of community. To the uninitiated peasants, the sirens at the dam site may as well be Wailing Devils. The lines of Markandaya are emblematic of dam building:

This river flowed deep, and thus far it had taken 2,000 men and 10,000 tons of equipment to tame it. The banks climbed sharply on each side, their lichen-covered slopes belying the intractable character of the volcanic rock strata underneath the aged surfaces. These strata had been



hardened and toughened by time, the slow aeons that passed in a flash of the cosmic clock, and had fused in places into granite walls through which the river carved its way on its own measured, merciless path. Here, in the angular fissures left by that long-ago meeting, the waters eddied and crashed, churning into froth and spume of a dazzling whiteness as they cascaded down. Clinton also envisioned his dam to be built between these granite cliffs and the waterfalls, with the dam's foundation rising two hundred feet from the river bed's solid rock through layers of sandstone and gravel (Markandaya, 1969).

In TCD, machinery play an important role, with the Avery Kent crane taking center stage. No more than 10 pages of a narrative can be read without mentioning Avery-Kent crane, proving its pervasiveness. Space is not only a static background against which human activity plays out; rather, it is an active presence that defines both story and character. The book projects an ecological Marxist anxiety about global capitalism. British technocrats at TCD demonstrate a preference for machinery above the well-being of people from hill tribes.

There is a machine maintenance business at the dam site, but no medical supplies or physicians are available for the local tribespeople. For Ecological Marxists, this is a clear example of the oppression of the vulnerable. Western modernism's machinery and Eastern primitivism's tribesmen are vastly outmatched in the arena. The machines represent the fruition of Western researchers' laborious visions. The tribesmen personify a dwindling civilization that is fighting for its own existence. When two tribal members are found dead in a trap, the tribesmen refuse

to work until the remains are recovered. As the story progresses, the division of labor into classes brought forth by industrial capital complicates relations between the British and Indian workers. The enormous, high-capacity crane can't lift the corpses to safety. The angry hill people won't join a work crew until their loved ones are found. Foster argues in his book *Marx Ecology* that it is crucial to maintain the unity of all human groups even in the midst of industrialization. They then watched the towering arm of the crane whose strength had flagged, or so it seemed the metal of its members had gone to fluid under some intolerable strain, and Bashiam tried his hand at lifting the boulder to free the two trapped bodies. This formerly rigid steel framework flexed and curved, and it started to fall, slowly and laterally, with very little acceleration due to the yielding and bending of the major booms. However, it crashed to the ground, straddling both land and water, trapping the guy who was still visible at the controls within its crushed cage (Markandaya, 1969).

Many organizations have the locals as their slave labor force. Divine, human, and natural forces are all exerting influence. The males of the hill tribes never blamed Mother Nature when rains failed or floods occurred. The people were lured by the promise of monetary gain, and the ancient tribal chief claims that this has driven them insane.

Markandaya uses the chief to voice her worries about the environment. The chief laments that the village's vegetation and animals have been destroyed. He describes how they had to leave their homes and farms because of an army invasion. The chief explains how the villagers' use of



dynamite to blast rocks has contaminated the local environment. Helen tries to teach the chief the value of money, but he becomes enraged when she says they can only spend it to buy useless items from the camp store like perfumed pigs oil to put on their hair. The chief further reveals that the hills men had abandoned farming in search of higher income.

CONCLUSION

The Literature is an important part of society and serves a social purpose. It's a reflection of our culture. In ancient societies, when folk poetry thrived, the author was even more reliant on the reception of his work; his poems would not be passed down from generation to generation unless they were instantly well received. In the theater, though, the audience's involvement is at least as palpable, and the number of middlemen between authors and readers rises accordingly. Salons, cafes, clubs, academies, and universities may all be investigated for the part they play in society. A critical intermediary emerges, and a community of readers, scholars, and collectors may rally around a particular genre or body of work. The economic status of the author's female protagonists is the focus of the fourth section of the research. If you're a member of the empty-belly race, you can't conceive of anything more pressing than feeding your stomach. since of this, her works are a rant against material deprivation since, as she sees it, it leads to spiritual desolation. Her early works feature female protagonists who are always struggling to get by. Both Nalini in the city and Rukmini in the rural attribute their woes on their lack of financial resources. They do not have sufficient

resources to provide a comfortable, predictable lifestyle. They symbolize the author's feminine perspective on the plight of the poor in terms of money. Her first work, *Nectar in a Sieve*, follows the experiences of Rukmini, a rural lady who marries Nathan, a poor tenant farmer. She put in more hours than the males did in her low-paying or non-paying job. The tannery represents the introduction of industry and contemporary technology to the rural community.

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