

Vimala As An Ecofeminist: An Analysis Of M.T.Vasudevan Nair's *Mist*

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Abstract

Kerala is the land blessed by nature with all its boons in abundance. The traditional culture of the state bears testimony to the ecological argument that the culture develops from the natural landscapes. The ecologically viable aspects of the civilization are manifest in the rich and glorious literary tradition of Malayalam which is distinctly marked by silver streaks of ecosensibility. M.T.Vasudevan Nair, one of the dominant figures on the cultural scenario of Kerala is true heir to the cultural and literary traditions of the land. This paper analyses M.T.Vasudevan Nair's *Mist (Manju)* from an ecofeministic perspective. M.T. has successfully lifted the landscape onto his canvas with the life-like portrait of the woman protagonist- Vimala, in the novel. The landscape and the weather operate as pervading symbolic presence in *Mist*, which imparts solemnity and intensity to the human drama.

Keywords: Ecosensibility, ecofeminism, landscape.

Kerala, the land blessed by nature with all its boons in abundance- plentiful rains, backwaters and numerous rivers, a copious diversity of vegetation, beautiful landscape, fertile soil and modern climate. The traditional culture of the state bears testimony, to the ecological argument that the culture develops from the natural landscapes. The ecologically viable aspects of the civilization are manifest in the rich and glorious tradition of Malayalam which is distinctly marked by the silver streaks of ecosensibility. It appears as a distinctive of literature from the days of the ancient bards like Thunchath Ezuthachan to the poets of today like Sugathakumari.

In spite of the erosion of religious faith and the slackening of customary beliefs the affinity with nature remains a remarkable aspect of Kerala culture. M.T.Vasudevan Nair, one of the renowned figures on the cultural scenario of Kerala is a true heir to the cultural and literary traditions of the land.

M.T.Vasudevan Nair, a celebrated presence in the literary and cultural scenario of Kerala is a genius who excels in different genres of writing. He is a prolific and versatile writer in modern Malayalam literature, and is one of the masters of post-independence Indian literature. He was born and brought up in a village on the banks of river Nila or Bharathapuzha Malappuram. The writer has so often acknowledged his indebtedness to the ethos of his village and to Nila which has ever been the mainspring of his creative inspiration. His debut novel *Naalukettu (The Legacy)* has won the Kerala Sahitya Academi Award in 1958. His other novels include *Manju (Mist)*, *Kaalam (Time)*, *Asuravithu (The Demon Seed)* and *Randamoozham (The Second Turn)*. Equally

impressive are his achievements in the field of cinema. He is a scriptwriter and a director of Malayalam films. He has won many National Awards for the films- “ Oru Vadakkan Veeragatha”, “Kadavu”, “Sadayam” and “Parinayam”.

The deep emotional experiences of M.T.’s early days have gone into the making of his novels. Most of his works are oriented towards the basic Kerala family structure and culture and many of them were path-breaking in the history of Malayalam literature.

Mist is a novella by M.T. Vasudevan Nair and is set in the hill station of Nainital and maintains a musical note across its narration. With minimal characters and few conversations the novella narrates the story of Vimala, a school teacher. Vimala is the only female protagonist of M.T. In spite of being a novella, the protagonist Vimala is a well-defined character. Her life, and family background, emotional set up etc are well etched. Vimala and Sudhir Misra had once shared a passionate affair filled with promises. But nine years have passed as she continues to wait for him. Sharing her anticipation is the boatman Buddhu, who is searching for his white father with the aid of only a faded photograph. Finally, the story hovers around a Sardarji, anticipating his death because of lung-cancer.

MT’s *Mist* picturises the ecofeministic theme of patriarchal and exploitation through the character of Vimala. The environmental ideology and ecocritical theories reached Kerala in from the late phase of the 20th century. Ecofeminist aesthetics is an unexplored and potential field in Malayalam and fresh parameters are to be devised for it to suit the situation in Kerala. However, the rich heritage of nation has the tradition of

respecting women and worshipping nature. This tradition has definitely inspired the oriental ecofeminist. Vimala cherishes an internal landscape of the village she had lived in Kerala until she was five years. When the bells of Nainidevi temple pealed out loud she was reminded of her visit to her village temple:

In her childhood she uses to visit the village temple every Tuesday and Friday. Beyond the paddy fields and the sand strewn lane lined with yellow flowers was the temple. There were small huts of weavers on the way and their yards were full of lines on which yarn was hung. When returning from the temple she should always gather handfuls of coral nuts near the fence. (*Mist* 10-11)

The strength and stability of internal nature is to a great extent, derived from the external nature to which one is attached. The experience of one's own native land and a lasting reciprocity with it contributes to the development of a healthy character. Vimala who was uprooted from the native milieu as a child had never got the chance of even visiting the village which still remains as a vague but strong passion in her memory.

The protagonist and her emotions and moods are fused with the changing colours of the scenario shifting with the progress of the seasons. Winter and associated environmental phenomena of snow and mist are loaded with the symbolic meaning of the novel. They indicate the eternal winter of sexual as well as emotional frigidity in the life of Vimala.

The backdrop of the splendid landscape Nainital stimulates the nature-lover in MT and brings out the genius in him. MT shuns detailed and eloquent descriptions and achieves wonderful effects through subtle evocative images like an imagist painter who imparts beauty and meaning to his pictures with light, gentle strokes of the brush. He has wonderfully portrayed the picturesque beauty of the hills, mist, snow and the mountains. Silence and solitude play a very important role in the novella. The novelist remarks that silence does not mean the absence of sounds but the presence of even the minutest sound.

M.T. Vasudevan Nair's *Mist* is poetic piece of work with the use of imageries and the innocence of the nature. It is incomplete and ambiguous in itself, but traverses to through the past and the present. The snow seems to be melting away in the heart of persons. The everlasting wait of people, especially the ecofeminist Vimala and nature is the essence of the novella.

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