

Enmakaje: A Prototype for Psycho-Social Anomaly and The Politics of Remonstrance

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Abstract

This article aims to examine the lived experiences of individuals affected by endosulfan in Kerala, as depicted in Ambikasuthan Mangad's Enmakaje (2009). This article examines the progression of ecological degradation in a once tranquil region, which can be attributed to the influence of crony capitalism and its promotion of industrial monoculture. The article highlights how this process has resulted in the estrangement of humanity and has led to both environmental and social marginalisation. The metabolic processes occurring in the natural world and its organisms are fundamental, emphasising the profound importance of transitioning from an individualistic perspective ("ego") to one that recognises the interconnectedness of all living systems ("eco"). Furthermore, the study emphasises the necessity of effective government interventions to address the metabolic rift that has emerged between human society and the natural environment, which has been exacerbated by the introduction of agrochemical endosulfan.

Keywords: living reality, ecological deprecations, crony capitalism, monoculture, environmental exclusion, metabolic rift.

Reflecting man's relationship with his physical environment, Lawrence Buell claims that "there cannot be is without where" (qtd. in Krishnasamy 55). The various manifestations of ecological critique aim to examine the representations of the connection between humans and nature and the changes that occur within this relationship. Ecocriticism, as a subfield within the realm of literary theory, undertakes comprehensive examinations of the intricate interconnections among nature, authors, and their literary creations. A transition from an individualistic mindset centred around ego-consciousness to a collective mindset focused on eco-consciousness is imminent as a consequence of this phenomenon. The examination of ecological implications and power dynamics inherent in the interplay between humans, nature, and natural processes forms the central focus of ecocritical analyses. Literature that incorporates an eco-conscious perspective effectively portrays the emotional and rational aspects of environmental crises and the urgent need to discover a universally applicable solution. The concept of "Deep Ecology" was formulated by Arne Naess, emphasising the fundamental interdependence between humans and nature, while challenging the previously prevalent perspective of anthropocentrism as detrimental. Ecocriticism critically examines the notions of "development" and "modernity" by emphasising the significance of preserving the natural well-being and ensuring the sustenance of future generations. Frequently, it is asserted that the present level of comfort experienced cannot be sustained by our existing methods of production without posing a significant risk to ecological systems. The traditional spiritual values attributed to nature have been significantly diminished, leading to a potentially disastrous disruption in the environmental equilibrium. The role of an eco-critic involves assuming the position of a mediator between the realms of human and non-human entities (Dean 3). The author places great importance on space and location as a fundamental factor in understanding the reciprocal relationship between human culture and nature. Cheryll Glotfelty, in her "Introduction" to *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* comments that an ecritic studies "the reciprocal relationships between humans and land, considering nature not just as the stage upon which human story is acted out, but as an actor in the drama" (xxi).

In Ambikasuthan Mangad's novel *Enmakaje* (2009), there is a notable critique of the spiritual values traditionally attributed to nature, which are portrayed as being supplanted by the detrimental actions of profit-driven corporations. This study examines the political, socio-cultural, and ethical attitudes of individuals, particularly those in positions of authority, towards nature and natural resources. *Enmakaje* serves as a poignant representation of the consequences arising from human intrusion into the natural world, particularly in relation to the subsequent generations. The novel primarily focuses on the consequences of Endosalphan poisoning in the village of Enmakaje, located in the Kasaragod District of Kerala. It explores the resistance movements that have emerged in response to this issue, as well as the visual representation of the victims.

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Given the widespread impact of neoliberal capitalism and the increasing prevalence of laissez-faire economies worldwide, it is apparent that the predominant emphasis of human existence has shifted towards the singular pursuit of financial gain, frequently disregarding essential elements such as familial bonds, environmental conservation, and the welfare of future generations. The literary work titled *Enmakaje* is set within the geographical confines of the Kasaragod district, known for its diverse cultural artefacts and abundant biodiversity. The region, which is widely recognised for its rich and varied agricultural practises, is currently facing significant challenges due to the negative effects of Endosalphan, a pesticide that has been used in cashew tree cultivation since the 1970s. The traditional mixed cropping system that was previously employed in Kasargod has been replaced by cashew plantations owned by corporations, influenced by the monoculture practises promoted by the renowned M. S. Swaminathan and his green revolution. This ultimately had dire consequences, as it intricately linked the survival of human beings with the surrounding ecosystem.

The region, characterised by the presence of thirteen rivers and a population surpassing five lakhs, is currently experiencing the detrimental consequences of pollution and the associated perils it poses. In light of the enduring deleterious effects caused by the pernicious discharge over a span exceeding four decades, it is disheartening to note the absence of any substantive response from the governing bodies or influential entities. Regrettably, the consequence has been a lamentable escalation in the incidence of cancer-related afflictions and the prevalence of congenital malformations among neonates. The existence within the region of Kasaragod, particularly in Enmakaje, serves as a conspicuous exemplification of an ecological catastrophe resulting from the practice of monoculture and its inherently "unsustainable and destructive" trajectory of development. The mere mention of "endosalphan" elicits profound trepidation within the contemporary populace, as if mortality itself pales in comparison to its significance. For individuals within this context, the concept of death has evolved into a source of solace amidst the overwhelming ecological inundation.

Enmakaje (2009) is a socio-political ecological novel authored by

Ambikasuthan Mangad, a highly regarded writer known for his expertise in environmentalism. The narrative explores the severe conditions experienced by the general population due to the destructive impacts of endosulfan poisoning in Enmakaje, a region located in Kasaragod. The novel's level of intrigue and enthusiasm is intensified by the author's keen social consciousness, which is additionally reinforced by their firsthand experiences. The novel, at its core, goes beyond a simple portrayal of human suffering, as it extends beyond the boundaries of realism to intricately incorporate the diverse elements of myths and folklore that are inherently connected to the particular geographical setting. *Enmakaje* can be conceptualised as a holistic portrayal of the genuine lived encounters of individuals who are situated in a condition of extreme poverty and devoid of power or control. The novel functions as a form of counter narrative that challenges the dominant political narratives pertaining to development and growth. The observed phenomenon can be characterised as a type of resistance, specifically a resistance driven by a collective multitude, aimed at challenging the indifferent stance demonstrated by governing bodies, such as corporations or a government influenced by corporate agendas. By examining the power dynamics and the governmental apparatus influenced by corporate interests, the novel also serves as a poignant reminder of the precariousness of human existence in the absence of a sustainable framework for development.

The narrative unfolds by following the experiences of two individuals who have chosen to withdraw from the fast-paced and crowded urban environments in favour of a more secluded existence in rural or specifically, forested areas. Two individuals, referred to as "man" and "woman", discover solace in "Swarga", a location in Enmakaje that is characterised by its surrounding hills and streams. The tranquilly of Swarga, accompanied by the densely wooded hills and numerous rivers, captivated the individuals known as Neelakantan and Devayani, who were represented as a male and female, respectively, and sought solace. The initial visual encounter with the location left a profound impression on the individual, leading him to contemplate the authenticity of its designation as Swarga or Paradise. The literary work titled *Enmakaje* depicts the transformative trajectory of a location, transitioning from a paradisiacal state that shares its name to a state of chaos and disorder, and from a state of obscurity to one of infamy.

The primary protagonists in the novel, referred to as the "man" and the "woman," engage in a process of relinquishing their individual identities in order to establish a novel realm characterised by transience and obscurity. Motivated by their disenchantment with the harsh realities of urban living, the two individuals, who refrain from identifying themselves as a couple but rather as two empathetic beings, abandon their entire previous life and embark on a quest for a state of obliviousness, or more accurately, a state of "non-existence". The concept of "non-places" is employed to deconstruct all locations in individuals' lives, rendering them as devoid of historical significance and lacking personal connection. Neelakantan, a male individual, embarked on a journey of renunciation during his earlier years. At the age of twenty-one, he made the conscious decision to sever all material ties with his society, family, and familial customs. The individual liberate themselves from the confines of established traditions, cultural norms, and insular familial structures, seeking refuge in a dwelling devoid of physical barriers, lacking both doors and windows. This abode symbolises inclusivity, welcoming all individuals without discrimination. The transition from a closed, compartmentalised, and institutionalised way of living to a more expansive, open, and inclusive existence, characterised by a lack of fixed identity or permanent residence, represents a comprehensive transformation. The formation of the man's world was not characterised by homogenised identities and shared social agreements, but rather by the fundamental needs of human

existence and individual entities. The female individual enters the confined yet conceptually unrestricted realm of the male psyche. The man extends a warm reception to her, inviting her into his realm devoid of conventional boundaries or limitations.

The man, in a profound act of personal transformation, relinquishes all ties to their former existence, including any tangible remnants thereof, such as their very appellation, and proceeds to seek refuge in the desolate and undulating terrain of Enmakaje. The female individual who accompanies the male counterpart likewise eludes the merciless forces that have ravaged her previous existence and means of subsistence. In a remarkable display of renunciation, the characters in question forsake their individual identities and instead align themselves with the fundamental duality of human existence, namely that of “man and woman”. By doing so, they embrace an inherent and organic connection with both humanity and the natural world, free from the trappings of urban sophistication and disloyalty. They are depicted as two discrete and mutually exclusive entities, each possessing divergent attitudes and perspectives. By means of the allegorical representations of the cave and mirror, the individual's essence is metaphorically dissected, solely to undergo a process of profound self-reflection. It is by means of this process of introspection that the readers can acquire knowledge pertaining to the concealed and disguised histories of the two individuals. In contrast to the stereotypical portrayal of the untamed and mysterious aspects of forest existence within literary narratives, this novel offers a respite that is perpetually embroiled in a discordant struggle with the inherently non-human characteristics of the human condition.

The couple's previously isolated and withdrawn lifestyle is interrupted by the arrival of a three-year-old child named Parikshit. It is noteworthy to mention that the parents of the child tragically committed suicide based on the belief that their child would be burdened with a curse upon entering this world. The predicament experienced by Parikshit is not limited to his individual circumstances, but rather encompasses a significant group of children who are born in the surrounding area and its surroundings. The progeny displayed a spectrum of congenital anomalies, respiratory dysfunctions, and diverse maladies. Devayani's emotional response was deeply triggered by the visual perception of the physically distorted juvenile, leading her to take on the responsibility for the child's welfare. During its early development, this specific decision evoked a strong and intense expression of anger from Neelakantan, which was notable for its aggressive nature. Nevertheless, as time elapsed, he discovered his inability to resist the inherent compassion that resided within him, ultimately succumbing to the challenging circumstances confronted by the child. The incident mentioned above acts as a notable catalyst for a substantial metamorphosis in the lives of Neelakantan and Devayani. Upon emerging from a state of unawareness, they began to actively interact with the external realities that had previously existed in an inanimate state in relation to their own existence. Neelakantan, who was previously recognised for his tranquil and reserved disposition reminiscent of a saint, has presently chosen to actively assume the position of a public advocate, rendering himself approachable and open to the general populace. Baffled by the puzzling situation of children affected by diverse disabilities, Neelakantan strives to decipher the fundamental underlying cause of this phenomenon. With the aid of the rural physician, he successfully challenges the prevailing superstitious belief held by the villagers, attributing all ailments to the malevolent influence of the mysterious entity referred to as “Jadadhari”.

The loss of Parikshit serves as a catalyst for a profound metamorphosis in Neelakantan. He emerges from his self-imposed seclusion and participates in a demonstration. Under the guidance of Jayarajan, a journalist and environmentalist, he and Devayani actively participate in protest demonstrations, only to encounter significant intimidation from the authorities. They are referred to as “Naxalites”, and the situation escalates significantly with the occurrence of Jayarajan's murder, characterised by severe repression. The novel's conclusion does not propose any definitive solution to address the disastrous circumstances depicted. Instead, it serves as a cautionary tale, highlighting the potential for human extinction resulting from relentless exploitation. This subversion of the novel's title, “Swarga” (heaven), to “Naraka” (hell), underscores the bleak outlook presented.

Undoubtedly, the novel illuminates a specific event in the lives of the inhabitants of Enmakaje, who had endured significant hardships for a period of eighty years. Throughout the early twentieth century, individuals from diverse backgrounds have engaged in various forms of protest; however, these efforts have yielded little or no tangible results. The demonstration of empathy towards human suffering, as exemplified by animals (as depicted in the novel through the snake), is incongruous with the disposition of any authoritarian individual. The region characterised by veracity, featuring a series of veracity-based measures, is currently experiencing a state of silence, while its copious water reserves have been contaminated, resulting in a highly unfavourable living condition for its residents. This situation serves as evidence of the hazardous ecological circumstances resulting from uncontrolled human interference during the Anthropocene era. Undoubtedly, the novel meticulously unravels the harsh realities faced by individuals affected by endosulfan. The support systems that individuals, governments, and other administrative entities rely on are often unfairly blamed due to the power dynamics that arise from corrupt relationships between government and corporate entities. Due to concerted global endeavours, Endosulfan was universally prohibited in 2011 under the auspices of the Stockholm Convention. In the year 2017, the Supreme Court of India, in its directive, instructed the state governments to disburse compensation to the victims. However, it is encouraging to observe the relatives and acquaintances of individuals impacted by the situation congregating in the courtyards of different governmental establishments in pursuit of their entitled monetary aid.

Paradoxically, it has been observed that the individuals residing in Kasargod continue to engage in labor-intensive activities within Cashew plantations, demonstrating an absence of diminished productivity within these plantations, despite the prohibition of endosalphan, a chemical compound that was initially implemented to enhance productivity levels. Now, a significant inquiry emerges: "What was this substance sprayed for?" Furthermore, it is crucial to consider who benefitted from this action. Additionally, there is a pressing concern regarding the future of these individuals who are burdened solely with distressing experiences. The ruling authorities are compelled to address these inquiries and create additional avenues for economic sustenance. Regrettably, the various alternative governing bodies consistently overlook the delicate nature of this existence, resulting in overt proposals that ultimately contribute to the systematic marginalisation of these vulnerable communities. The lives of individuals affected by endosulfan toxicity exhibit peculiarities that surpass the realm of imagination. Over the past few decades, scholars, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and international agencies have conducted extensive research on the detrimental consequences of agrochemical poisoning. However, there appears to be a lack of acknowledgement or recognition, referred to as "convenient amnesia," within the executive branch of the country. This lack of recognition has resulted in delays in implementing the recommended rejuvenation guidelines put forth by these agencies.

In summary, the social exclusion experienced by the residents of Enmakaje results in a phenomenon known as "environmental exclusion", whereby the affluent segments of society are able to evade the adverse repercussions that the less privileged segments are inevitably subjected to.

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