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## ROLE OF WATER IN *EERAM*, THE TAMIL MOVIE: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS IN THE ECO-CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE

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### ABSTRACT

Ecocriticism is the study of representations of nature in literary works and of the relationship between literature and the environment. The term “ecocriticism” was coined in 1978 by William Rueckert and his intent was to focus on “the application of ecology and ecological concepts to the study of literature,” whereas Cheryl Glotfelty, has defined ecocriticism as “the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment,” and Laurence Buell says that this study must be “conducted in a spirit of commitment to environmentalist praxis” while David Mazel declares it is the analysis of literature “as though nature mattered.” Man’s life and nature are so interlinked that it is not possible for human beings to separate themselves from its influence. Therefore they have no choice but to accept both nature’s bounty and adversity. This can be said to be reciprocal as nature too is the recipient of man’s action. Our irresponsible actions cause irreparable damages to nature. This is how the chain of ecosystem works in which everything is related to each other and therefore affects each other. This inter link is the focus of this paper as it aims to highlight the relationship between the protagonist of the movie, *Eeram* and the physical setting as well as raises the following questions: How is nature represented in the film, *Eeram*? What role does the physical setting play in the plot of this movie? Water and rain is the motif around which the film flows. In the movie, when Ramya, the protagonist, is alive, the water reflects her mood; when she dies, water remains the medium of her death; after her death, it is used as her weapon to take revenge on the people responsible for her death. Vasu could sense the presence of the spirit and only the water elements are the indicators. Water was almost like a character taking the lead role in the movie, predicting the future and confirming the past.

Key words: *Eeram*, ecocriticism, water, ecology, nature

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Ecocriticism is the study of representations of nature in literary works and of the relationship between literature and the environment. The term “ecocriticism” was coined in 1978 by William Rueckert in his essay “*Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism*.” His intent was to focus

on “the application of ecology and ecological concepts to the study of literature.” Cheryl Glotfelty, one of the pioneers in the field, has defined ecocriticism as “the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment,” and Laurence Buell says that this study must be

“conducted in a spirit of commitment to environmentalist praxis.” David Mazel declares it is the analysis of literature “as though nature mattered.” Another landmark American nonfiction work about nature was Ralph Waldo Emerson's *Nature* (1836). This essay is the writer's statement on the principles of the philosophy of Transcendentalism, which he describes as “a hypothesis to account for nature by other principles than those of carpentry and chemistry.” In this work, Emerson talks about the mystical unity of nature and urges his readers to enjoy a relationship with the environment. Other American writers of the period whose work has been seen as important by ecocritics include William Cullen Bryant, James Kirke Paulding, James Fenimore Cooper, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Walt Whitman, and a number of minor writers.

In Britain, in the nineteenth century, the Romantic poets reacted strongly against the eighteenth-century emphasis on reason and sought new ways of expressing their thoughts and feelings. William Wordsworth, considered by many to be the spokesman of the movement, celebrates the beauty and mystery of nature in some of his most famous lyrics, including “*Michael*” (1800), which portrays a simple shepherd who is deeply attached to the natural world around him. Wordsworth's autobiographical poem *The Prelude* (1850) records the poet's evolving understanding of nature, and *The Excursion* (1814) is a long philosophical reflection on the relationship of humanity and nature. The poetry of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, John Keats, Lord Byron, and Percy Shelley also includes emotional descriptions of the natural world and features some of the best-known nature verse in English. Shelley's “*Ode to the West Wind*,” to cite one example, has been called the most inspired lyrical poem describing nature in the English language.

Ecocriticism, known by a number of other designations, including “green (cultural) studies”, “ecopoetics”, and “environmental literary criticism”, is the study of literature and environment from an interdisciplinary point of view where all sciences come together to analyze the environment and brainstorm possible solutions for the correction of

the contemporary environmental situation. Ecocriticism was officially heralded by the publication of two seminal works, both published in the mid-1990s: *The Ecocriticism Reader*, edited by Cheryl Glotfelty and Harold Fromm, and *The Environmental Imagination*, by Lawrence Buell. As critics have pointed out, one of the reasons that ecocriticism continues to grow as a discipline is the continued global environmental crisis. Ecocriticism aims to show how the work of writers concerned about the environment can play some part in solving real and pressing ecological concerns.

In India, in the context of Ecocriticism, Raja Rao is known as one of the most prominent writers of Indian English novels. His depiction of the South Indian village culture and environmental setting is a true depiction of relationship between man and nature. In his novel ‘*Kanthapura*’ he has shown how rivers and mountains play an important role in people's lives. In this novel they call the mountain as Goddess Kenchamma and they consider it responsible for both – their prosperity and their adversity. R. K. Narayan wrote in the same decade and has given life to a place, Malgudi, or it can be said that he has developed a place as a character which can be seen in almost all his prose fictions bearing the same features. Professor Iyenger rightly advocates the theory that Malgudi is the real ‘hero’ of ten novels and the many short stories of Narayan and that underneath the seeming change and the human drama there is something the ‘soul’ of the place that defies or embraces all changes and is triumphantly and unalterably itself.

Nature has always proved to be stronger than man. It has often shown its power by controlling manpower through natural calamities like famine, drought, flood, earthquake etc. The effect of one such natural calamity on the humanity can be seen in Bhabani Bhattacharya's *So Many Hungers* and Kamala Markandya's *Nectar in Sieve*. Ruskin Bond, through his short stories for children he has tried to convey an important message to everyone, that is, the importance of nature in our life. In his *An Island of Trees* the grandmother reveals to her granddaughter, Koki, the deep bond that grows between humans and nonhumans if only there is love and compassion. *No Room for a*

*Leopardis* about deforestation and its accompanying aftermath. It presents the pathetic condition of the animals after deforestation. In *Copperfield in the Jungle* he shows abhorrence towards hunting for pleasure which can never be justified. *The Tree Lover*, *The Cherry Tree*, *All Creatures Great and Small* and many others are all about the chain which binds man and nature, as in the chain of ecosystem, showing interdependence.

The other prominent writer of this age in whose work we see the dominance of nature images which act as important part of theme is Anita Desai. Nature which includes animals, plants and birds, has a strong presence in almost all her works. Known in Indian-English fiction for ushering in the psychological novel, Desai uses external landscapes to portray interior states of mind. Her daughter, Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* straddles across continents, mapping the contours of the ethno-racial and historical relationship between people from different cultures and backgrounds. The novel bounces between an insurgency in India and the immigrant experience. It presents the Azima Rachel's concept of selftransplantation. Desai crosses international boundaries (India and USA) and shows her character from cross-cultural ecocritical perspective.

Man's life and nature are so interlinked that it is not possible for human beings to separate themselves from its influence. Therefore they have no choice but to accept both nature's bounty and adversity. This can be said to be reciprocal as nature too is the recipient of man's action. Our irresponsible actions cause irreparable damages to nature. This is how the chain of ecosystem works in which everything is related to each other and therefore affects each other. This inter link is the focus of this paper as it aims to highlight the relationship between the protagonist of the movie, *Eeram* and the physical setting as well as raises the following questions: How is nature represented in the film, *Eeram*? What role does the physical setting play in the plot of this movie?

True to the title, the movie has *Eeram* (wetness) as its basic element and has made the feeling of wetness spreading throughout the narrative. *Eeram*, what starts as a crime thriller

takes twists and turns and ends up as a horror show. The movie revolves around Ramya (Sindhu Menon) who is found dead in a bathtub at her posh apartment. It looks like an apparent case as she has left behind a suicide note taking up the responsibility of her death. But DSP Vasudevan (Aadhi), ex-lover of Ramya, suspects and decides to look at the death in different angles. He becomes emotional and nostalgic on seeing the body of his ex-lover. The story proceeds as flashback scenes are intermixed along with the police investigation into her death. He suspects foul play in the incident and enquires Bala (Nandaa), Ramya's husband and several other neighbours.

However, Vasudevan is yet to make progress in the case. An interesting flashback reveals that Vasu and Ramya met each other in Tiruchy during their college days and love blossomed at the local bus stop and her sister Divya (Saranya Mohan) played cupid. But due to opposition from her dad, the marriage never took place. Ramya marries a businessman Bala (Nandha), and they look like leading a happy life till she "commits suicide." Vasu whose heart still aches for his ex-flame suspects "foul play" as key people in the apartment building end up in watery graves. The rays of suspicion fall on Ramya's husband Bala (Nandha) and her neighbours. Mysterious murders continue to haunt the apartment and hence the problem gets intensified. Vasu's meticulous search unearths some bizarre things and the unfolding of the mystery comes as a shock. Finally his investigation leads to some startling facts as he starts seeing the ghost of Ramya which through Divya narrated the whole mystery behind her death and the numerous murders that followed it.

Water and rain is the motif around which the film flows. In the movie, when Ramya is alive, the water reflects her mood; when she dies, water remains the medium of her death; after her death, it is used as her weapon to take revenge on the people responsible for her death. Vasu could sense the presence of the spirit and only the water elements are the indicators. Water was almost like a character taking the lead role in the movie, predicting the future and confirming the past.

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**Author's Introduction:** Being an able leader, ideal team player and enthusiastic personality with exceptionally good management capabilities and communication skills, **Dr. B. Janaki** is a doctorate in English from Dayalbagh Educational Institute, Agra and is engaged in teaching Functional English in Kingdom University, Kingdom of Bahrain. Having acquired immense experience in participating and organizing various kinds of academic activities from varied academic institutions of repute, she leaves no stone unturned to remain occupied in her research pursuit on the stream of English Language Teaching, British Fiction & Indian Writing in English. She has numerous conference publications to her credit and she is known for her contribution to the academics and student community.

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