

Development and Displacement as Slow Erasure: An Eco-Social Reading of Nectar in a Sieve

Author details:-

Mampi Sau (Individual Research Scholar) ; I have completed my post graduation from Vidyasagar University.

ABSTRACT:-This paper explores eco-social conflict in *Nectar in a Sieve* through the lens of environmental justice and postcolonial ecocriticism. The novel presents the transformation of a self-sustaining agrarian village under the impact of industrialization, symbolized by the establishment of the tannery. While industrial development promises economic progress, it simultaneously disrupts ecological balance and dismantles traditional rural life. The paper argues that environmental degradation in the novel is inseparable from social inequality. The loss of fertile land, food scarcity, rising prices, and displacement disproportionately affect marginalized peasants, particularly women like Rukmani, whose survival is intimately tied to the land. The tannery becomes a metaphor for exploitative modernity that privileges profit over people. By foregrounding the intersection of ecology, poverty, and gender, the novel redefines environmental justice in the Indian context—not merely as conservation of nature, but as protection of vulnerable communities whose identities and livelihoods are rooted in the environment. Thus, *Nectar in a Sieve* critiques the unequal distribution of environmental harm and questions the moral cost of “development.”

KEYWORDS:-Environmental Justice, Agrarian Crisis, Industrialization, Displacement, Peasant Struggle, Rural Marginalization, Gender and Ecology.

INTRODUCTION:-

Markandaya criticizes how the so called process of development works as a medium which intensifies poverty, generates environmental and social precarity and erodes traditional livelihood. The novel explores the theme of development, displacement and ecological disruption. This study does not present the concept of displacement merely as a forced process but it explores how displacement takes place through ‘slow erasure’. While in general the study of *Nectar in a sieve* in traditional way focuses on poverty and eviction, my paper examines more insidious transformation in which individual identity, ecological balance and social structures are progressively dismantled. This study mentioned or applies the idea of ‘Slow Violence’ by Rob Nixon, who said- “ By Slow Violence I mean a violence that occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attributed violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all” . This concept is important to understand how the text shows displacement not as a forced thing but as a pre planned, prolonged process of loss or erosion. From the perspective of eco-social criticism and Rob Nixon’s concept of slow violence, this paper examines industrialization which is represented by the tannery which exercised invisible forms of harm. Therefore the novel explores how the theme called

development and displacement are both connected through the rising process of loss. Nectar in a sieve written by kamala Markandaya portrays a powerful picture of Indian rural life and the hardships and sufferings faced by people's of the poor rural village. These are portrayed through the main protagonist of the novel called Rukmani she lives with her husband Nathan. She throughout the narrative narrates her story which is filled with sufferings, uncertainty, hunger and poverty. As a villagers' they depend on nature for their livelihood and stability. Nature produces both the means of sustainability and livelihood. However their life started to disrupts because of the industrial development which is introduced with the arrival of the tannery. While this usually gives people hope with opportunities, jobs , more activities but as the novel started progressing and the story unravels it started introducing so many conflicts. It gradually affects the lives of villagers by weakening agriculture. The economical change started taking place. The villagers slowly begins to depend on the uncertain source of income which leads them to loose their connection with nature, lands , and their regular life of agriculture. This becomes the starting point of destruction, changing their happy life to the frustrated one. Most of the crisis occurs because of the displacement which becomes the main effect of development in the novel.

LITERATURE REVIEW:-

Many scholars have already done their research on Nectar in a sieve. Nectar in a sieve is a prominent novel which covers sufferings, struggles of various characters. While many scholars focuses on the topic of sufferings, struggle and the continuous process of endurance among characters specifically the central character named Rukmani. My paper tries to adjust the gap by examining the theme of development and displacement. My paper illustrates how the process leads to the disruption of lives of human beings. The study also explores the theme of slow erasure and examines the novel from that perspective.

Many critical studies has evolved on this topic from the very early if humanistic readings .But Now scholars approaches the texts theoretically. My study engages the theory of ecocriticism, which basically suggest or shows the relationship between human and nature. The novel can be discussed through the analysis of the relationship between literature and environment and draws the emerging issue of natural and ecological imbalance. These theme is also highlighted through the study of Nectar in a sieve as the lives of local habitants were dependent completely on natural production.

This study also involves the post colonial ecocriticism which further expands the analysis. These post colonial issue is highlighted through the aspects such as migration, displacement etc. My paper also introduces the concept of slow violence by Rob Nixon which is described properly in the introduction part. The study also points out the invisible harm to nature, brought by the new development. The Slow Violence expands through the declining agriculture productivity and the normalisation of hunger. Many prominent scholars like Vandana Shiva and Ramachandra Guha highlights the socio-economic consequences of development. Their works underscores how the concept of development only benefits the upper class while the lower class gets nothing. For this the sufferings of lower class people even stats increasing than before.

However, my study discusses the novel Nectar in a sieve from a different perspectives. There is few attention which is paid to the single theme of development and displacement and that's too from the point of view of slow erasure. So overall my paper discusses a different perspectives. Although my paper builds upon the existing idea but it intrigues some different theme of Slow Erasure and illustrates development and displacement from that point of view.

ANALISIS/DISCUSSION:-

Nectar in a sieve is all about people's connection towards nature and their slow departure from their roots. As the novel opens we can see the life of Rukmani, her family and her surrounding. Her life depends on nature and natural landscape. They live with all natural calamities which although provides struggles but side by side also provides sustenance for the local people. As the novel unfolds we noticed that the society is based on agrarian culture. Agriculture is not just provide them stability but at some point it provides or better we can say it works as a form of identity for the local individuals too. Rainfall, harvest, and seasonal cycles is the structure it rhythms of their everyday lives. These elements while in surface threatened their life but similarly these provides belonging and sense of continuity. Nature with all its calamities are very much familiar to Rukmani and other characters.

The Rhythms of their everyday life disrupts with the arrival of the tannery. These incident serves as a transformation point for the local individuals. While they were used to survive all the natural cyclical calamities but the introduction of the tannery becomes permanent and it causes change. Slowly it started changing people's livelihood. While in surface it appears to bring opportunity, activities, more job or works internally it stimulates change makes individual life more complex or frustrating.

The tannery gradually changes the villagers lifestyle. Their arrival starts to disrupt the villagers regular traditional life and causes a great shift of their life by making the innocent individual drawn towards the wage labour. The land which once plays the role of central source of livelihood and survival for people, started loosing it's significance as the people starts depending on market gradually. This exact situation serves as the first most initial stage of slow erasure. This change completely disrupts human life and weakens the relationship between human and nature.

Slowly people started normalising hunger. It's not like they have never experienced these kind of situation. Definitely they have experience as hunger is broadly associated with poor harvest too. They have experienced this in many damaged season. But as the development progresses this issue becomes more regular and permanent. There is a visible presence of hunger in the characters life specifically in the life of the prominent character Rukmani. Not just her character but the other characters also starts suffering hunger more than before because of hunger. People started accepting hunger by reducing consumption of food and also by adjusting their expectations. This slow process of normalisation of hunger reflects a deeper structural change. The arrival of tannery which previously serves as a source of development slowly started to destroy human lives. This so

called development initially challenges the traditional villagers life by disrupting food production and also by making them dependent on unstable economic forces. As a consequence the frequency of hunger arises and slowly becomes a crisis or a permanent reality. This turning point illustrates how the process of slow erasure operates at both level. At one side it affects the material State and on the other it affects the psychological level also. These gradually changes the concept of normal life .

In many cases development is often regarded as the most prominent effect of displacement and this novel is no exception. This novel also portrays how development contributes towards displacement. The most important character of the novel which is Rukmani and Nathan are forced to leave their land which is very much sudden and devastating. Although their migration follows many incidents which particularly weakens their relationship to the land . There is a series of gradual change which predates the physical displacement of this two characters. The increasing dependency of people towards development causes many crucial incidents which undermine local villagers connection to the nature. Incident such as declining productivity, rising prices creates a sense of insecurity for the local inhabitants which initially causes the eviction.

The above paragraph suggest that displacement occurs not just because of one incident, a series of incidents is there behind the sudden displacement. Throughout the discussion we see that displacement occurs not just in physical level but also in mental level too. The characters such a Nathan and Rukmani gave up their identity as a farmer long before their eviction or displacement. Their role as a farmers weakens because of the society called process of development. Their identity as farmers has already been erased by the time they leave their homeland. These suggest that a lot of incidents were there which culminates the slow erasure of people.

The whole process of displacement and development is also served as the main aspect of the slow violence. This process affected the lives of villagers. First of all these events leads to the physical suffering of human beings . The events such as declining productivity, rising prices, hunger and exhaustion , illness are not sudden incident but it's the result of the culmination of long ongoing process of erasure or hardships. All these sufferings were inscribed on their body . Their body becomes a site which explores the harmful or critical consequences of slow erasure or slow violence which is caused because of the so called development. The crucial process of development also leads to the death of the character named Nathan . He died because of the following incidents in the novel such as malnutrition, illness and ultimately for the overall gradual deterioration.

However, the novel also explores the erosion of emotional and social stability . People in the novel started changing places , they come migrated from one place to the other in search of jobs, opportunities etc. Throughout these process their family becomes fragmented. A disruption among the community started taking place. Here the concept of community become important here as this is a concept which once characterized village life, gradually this started to dissolve and isolation takes place. These totally caused the devastation of the characters internal life.

So the interlinked occurrences which is depicted throughout the novel ultimately presents development as the main reason behind displacement along with all the sufferings faced by the human beings. It throws a challenge towards the notion of progress by suggesting or revealing all the consequences.

METHODOLOGY:-

This study is completely based on qualitative approach which is grounded in close reading or analysis of the text. So, the particular novel entitled *Nectar in a sieve* is specifically a combining study provides an interdisciplinary framework. The novel engages three or more concepts such as ecocriticism, eco-social criticism and also a broad area of post colonial theory.

The main discussion of the study is to analyse or identify how the novel explores the gradual loss or change in human lives along with the narrative. So many themes are discussed here such as agrarian life, hunger, industrial development and emotional experience. These key thematic areas are interconnected which in together makes a contribution to the gradual loss or change of human lives. These themes draw how slow erasure takes place in the novel.

Slow erasure and slow violence are two different themes but are closely related. Where slow erasure is an extended version of slow violence. On one hand slow erasure suggests the gradual loss of identity, agency, power, dependence and memory on the other hand slow violence depicts the temporal disruption of natural loss. The overall study ultimately contributes to the broad or deeper understanding that how the concept of development caused harm to not just the material conditions but to the cultural, traditional and psychological aspects of life also.

CONCLUSION:-

The novel is prominent as it discusses the theme of development and displacement through the lens of slow erasure. The process is different yet revealing as it reveals the whole theme of the novel through this term. By examining various forms or aspects of transformation such as – personal, social or ecological this paper examines that displacement is not a sudden process but it takes time to disrupt the tradition. It is a slow destructive process which causes the change without making individuals realise. In one this is the ongoing process of loss.

By examining eco social and Rob Nixon's concept the paper analyses how the cumulative and almost invisible nature of harm is associated with the very concept of development. Thus the paper demonstrates that how modernism has long term effects on individuals, specifically in those who live in close proximity with nature. This novel criticizes the overall concept of modernization and reveals how at one stroke, the arrival of modernization which is represented through the arrival of the tannery which disrupts human life and changes their livelihood without making them realise it.

So, ultimately the novel serves as a awareness and the study shows that the individual whose life depends on nature shall consider that nothing should come in the exchange of their dignity. The false promises of progression and modernity must not occur at the very cost of their ecological balance. So the study ultimately presents the novel to rethink that development should come with sustainability not by sacrificing ecological balance or by causing any harms to nature. So the study underscores how the fake development shapes human life and their livelihood along with their landscape. And the concept of slow erasure perfectly draws the framework for understanding the novel's enduring significance.

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