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THE FLORA AND FAUNA IN KARNAD : A STUDY OF *NĀGA-MANDALA* AND *THE FIRE AND THE RAIN*

Devamitra Chakraborty

Abstract

Downing Cless argues that “natural environments become dramatic forces, taking action with agency or reacting as enforced victims, not unlike characters” in plays which can “powerfully bring on stage the other-than-human world and its endangerment”(1). Moreover, Critics like Christine Gerhardt and Christa Grewe-Volpp speak about the possibility of intersection of ecocriticism and ecofeminism and create new avenues for reading texts to understand the symbiotic relationship between human and the nonhuman spheres. This paper tries to analyse the representation of the nonhuman world in Karnad’s two plays— *Nāga-Mandala* (1988) and *The Fire and the Rain*(1994)— to understand the ecological ideas and vision of the playwright from an eclectic perspective. The two plays together bring on the stage the biotic sphere of the natural environment, the fauna and the flora. Besides presenting a gallery of animals that comprise both the physical world and the psychological world of its heroine, *Nāga-Mandala* has, a nonhuman animal, as a major character who morphs into human shape to become a protagonist. *The Fire and The Rain*, has the abiotic elements in the very title of the play. The play is set on a barren land which is parching in famine and the people are desperate to get rains. But as a contrast to this wasteland there is a reference to a forest which becomes an off stage character in the play. The texts read together give us the playwright’s vision of the relationship between the human world and the non-human world which is shaped by Indian cultural and philosophical traditions. But the plays are also interrogative in nature which interrogates the discourse of development propagated by capitalist discourse that has victimized both the fauna and flora. The texts give us the picture of rural India which lives in close proximity to nature and they share a symbiotic relationship with it. The plays also highlight that in the human world it is the woman who shares greater proximity to nature in comparison to man.

Keywords : Ecocriticism, ecofeminism, development, environment, dominant discourses, Other, woman

Downing Cless in his introduction to his book *Ecology and Environment in European Drama* argues that “natural environments become dramatic forces, taking action with agency or reacting as enforced victims, not unlike