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RURAL EMPOWERMENT IN K.P. POORNACHANDRA
TEJASWI'S KARVALO

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Keywords

Abstract

This paper examines the theme of village development as seen in the famous novel Karvalo written by celebrated Kannada novelist K.P. Poornachandra Tejaswi. This novel is written in the background of the Western Ghats mountain range of India. The main themes of Karvalo is the new sense of awareness among the village people because of awareness of nature and the need to protect it. The knowledge of science and technology among the younger generation of the villagers has changed their attitude and now they know that the fate of their poverty-ridden villages can be changed by making use of the knowledge of sustainable development. The central characters of the novel are a scientist called Karvalo and Ponnayya, a smart hunter. This novel shows us how village people can change their own lives by actively engaging in scientific attitudes and direct action. This novel focuses on the upliftment of the rural community with the awareness of nature and urgent need to preserve it. This paper analyses the framework of the novel and its role as an instrument of eco-criticism. The novel goes beyond the usual themes in rural fiction such as the beauty of nature or the poverty of the tribal people. This novel is written in a more democratic way emphasizing the ability of the rural youth to look into their own affairs and to give clear leadership in the field of conservation. What is important here is that ecological preservation becomes the priority of the village people not through external interference but by their own sense of awareness. They have started pressurizing for nature using methods of dialogue and communication with



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the outer world. They have understood the value of preserving nature from their own observation and they have applied this knowledge to protect Mother Nature which gives them food and nourishment. The respect given to nature by the village people is far superior to the same given by city people. For the village people, nature is something real with which they are associated with on a daily basis. For the city people, nature is something they learn from the text books and their eagerness for conservation comes from a high-level civic sense rather than personal experience. This paper finds out that Karvalo gives us a new insight into the theory of empowering village people because the village people uses their indigenous knowledge for understanding rather than copying from city models. This paper challenges the tradition divide between the rural people and the intellectuals. Rural people have now reached a level of awareness that makes them able to generate their own intellectuals who can contribute equally well compared to the city intellectuals. This paper also emphasizes the role of literature in reshaping village life. The villages of India have reached a level of awareness that makes them able to look at nature in a more comprehensive view which helps them to redefine their relationship with nature resulting in a greater level of conservation of our resources.

1. INTRODUCTION

Rural empowerment has been a central theme of literary discourse for a long time. Ours is a country that has two-thirds of its population residing in rural areas where understanding the dynamics of rural development is not limited to economic planning but has cultural and philosophical importance. Regional literature has contributed to shaping the models of rural empowerment. In this context, K.P. Poornachandra Tejaswi's Karvalo plays a very significant role giving a refreshing perspective.

The rural literature of early 20th century had common themes such as land struggles, caste oppression, Gandhian theories whereas Karvalo contains a completely different theme. It discusses empowerment from rural capacity, inquiry and intellectual growth. The protagonist of the novel is a city-based scientist who teams-up with the narrator, a farmer and a local hunter, set up to track Draco Dussumieri, a rare species of flying lizard. Tejaswi adopts their journey amidst the Western Ghats as an allegorical expedition explaining the meaning of life, and knowledge leading to empowerment. In this work of Tejaswi's nature is not just a setting but a teacher; the villagers are not victims, instead creators of knowledge.

Tejaswi's ideas are deeply ecological and coherent. He doesn't advocate village life, nor does he portray it as backward. Instead, he challenges the concepts of progress, positions rural landscape as abode of intellectual inquiry. This theme is noteworthy, keeping in mind the contemporary arguments where villages are commonly illustrated as places to be 'liberated' or something that is seen as the remnant of the past.



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This paper attempts to explore how Karvalo challenges these ideas. It aims to depict how Tejaswi conceptualizes rural empowerment that is not based on money matters but ecological consciousness and scientific curiosity. By doing so, Tejaswi blurs the borders between the ordinary and the intellectual, rural and the urban, inhumane and the humane.

This paper aims to comprehend the presentation of rural empowerment in literature – not just as a reaction to pain but as a practical, mindful and philosophical journey.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The study of rural empowerment, in Indian literature, has usually contained issues of land ownership, oppression, poverty, and political reform. Great litterateurs like Munshi Premchand, Mulk Raj Anand, and R.K. Narayan have presented the view of rural life in numerous types, illustrating the complicated structure of village ecosystems in India. Premchand's *Godaan* portrayed the socio-economic exploitation faced by farmers, while Anand's *Untouchable* showed the caste-based discrimination and lack of mobility in rural regions. On the other side, Narayan provided more lighthearted and comic portrayals of Indian villages in transition through the creation of his fictional town of Malgudi. Thus, these authors created a literary custom which portrayed rural empowerment in the framework of social reform movements, postcolonial state-building, and Gandhian ideology.

K.P. Poornachandra Tejaswi deviates from this tradition. His works examine social reforms as well as the relationship between scientific rationality and ecological sensibility in rural areas. To Tejaswi, nature and knowledge are vital in empowering villagers. In his novel *Karvalo*, he challenges urban dominance, depicting rural space, not as stagnant or subservient, but as fundamentally capable of generating knowledge and curiosity alongside transformative intellect.

The Bandaya literary movement—the progressive sociocultural literary wave in Kannada literature which attempted to dismantle the caste system and elevate the oppressed—was viewed by H.S. Shivaprakash (2005) as the context in which Tejaswi's works are put in background. In Shivaprakash's view, *Karvalo* depicts an epistemic revolution: science and adventure are democratized for peasant, non-educational, rural protagonists. The scientist as a character, *Karvalo*, for example, does not play the role of an arrogant distant superior but works with the narrator and Ponnayya, the local hunter, who are all keen to discover Draco lizards. Their trek is a journey toward self-discovery and knowledge that is rooted in the countryside.

B.N. Sumathi (2017) provides both a feminist and eco-critical view of *Karvalo* commenting on the absence of female characters with appreciation of Tejaswi's intricate patriarchal community expositions. Sumathi claims that Tejaswi's ethical portrayal of nature and knowledge is radical. He does not portray the villagers as static traditionalists; rather, he captures them as people who embrace science and their surroundings in meaningful ways. Their empowerment lies not in discarding custom, but in melding tradition with knowledge in a sophisticated manner.



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Karvalo can also be analyzed through the lens of eco-criticism which is a very valuable perspective. Cheryll Glotfelty states that eco-criticism is the study of literature in a physical environment. This is where Tejaswi's novel actually shines. The Western Ghats does not serve only as the scene; it is a character by itself that lives and breathes throughout the narrative. The mysterious yet knowable forest evokes Vandana Shiva's (1993) notion that biodiversity and community empowerment remain deeply intertwined. In Karvalo, ecological comprehension is not a luxury. The region's rural dwellers benefit directly through their interaction with these diverse ecosystems.

Furthermore, D.R. Nagaraj's reflections regarding Kannada modernity illuminate Tejaswi's writings on a philosophical level. Nagaraj contends that the literary generation to which Tejaswi belongs shifted Indian modernity to experiential, contemporary, and rural life, rupturing the assimilated scholarly thought of colonial and Brahminical thought. The characters from Karvalo participate in learned conversations about evolution, biology, and the philosophy of science – doing precisely what Tejaswi's characters do, and proving beyond doubt that intellectual life does not belong solely to urban intellectuals.

Another remarkable contribution has been made by K.S. Bhagawan, who labels Tejaswi as a humanist and rationalist. For Bhagawan, Karvalo amounts to a model of rural enlightenment, inviting readers to reconceptualize the village as a place of scientific effort and moral citizenship. This is not an imposed empowerment, but a kind of self-discovery fostered by ecological discovery.

In spite of these analyses, Karvalo has not received constant attention in the context of rural empowerment. Most critiques consider its ecological or philosophical aspects separately.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research is conducted using a qualitative, literary analysis approach to examine rural empowerment in K.P. Poornachandra Tejaswi's novel, Karvalo. By blending theoretical frameworks and textual analysis, this study analyzes how Tejaswi represents a form of rural empowerment that combines ecological awareness, scientific inquiry, and community engagement. The methodology is situated in the interdisciplinary fields of eco-criticism, postcolonial rural studies, and the democratization of knowledge.

Textual Analysis

A close textual analysis of Karvalo includes a look at the representation of rural life and scientific exploration, the agency of the principal characters—namely Karvalo, the narrator, and Ponnayya—and the structure of the narrative. The examination of the narrative structure and character development acknowledges the themes presented in the research but is primarily focused on how empowerment is represented through being intellectually engaged with nature, as well as through curiosity, scientific inquiry, and exploration. The relationships between characters were also examined to see how knowledge and ideas were shared and co-constructed between people with different social and educational backgrounds. In addition, specific attention was paid to the



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landscapes described as rural, with a significant focus on the Western Ghats, and how the landscape could also be viewed as an active agent in the movement towards empowerment.

Theoretical Frameworks

The analysis is based on a multitude of theoretical frameworks that give a well-rounded framework to understand rural empowerment in Karvalo.

1. **Eco-Criticism:** The use of eco-criticism here involves examining Karvalo's representation of human-ecology interactions. Eco-criticism as a term can refer to how literature deals with nature, and how nature features in the narrative as taking an agency (as in its own character) rather than as mere setting. In Karvalo, we don't simply observe the forest and biodiversity as the physical setting of the location of the empowerment journey, however it does have an important role in the empowerment journey. The story tells the importance of environmental stewardship as rural empowerment, as part of their journey when rural people are taking action to protect and understand their local natural environment.
2. **Post-Colonial Rural Studies:** This framework is used as a way to interrogate the legacy of colonialism making the relationship between rural India and the sites of political power in urban centers more complex. Postcolonial studies regularly grapple with the rural/urban binary and how policies shape rural sites to be seen as backward or dependent upon urban expertise. In my exploration, I present how Tejaswi, in Karvalo, combats these associative contexts of being rural through foregrounding rural life as an ever-changing site of scientific/intellect purposes, presenting rural characters as purposeful agents in their search for knowledge.
3. **Knowledge Democratization:** As considered by authors Foucault (1980), and Freire (1998), this framework discusses what it means to democratize knowledge and to have it exist for everyone in society, particularly those in marginalized groups. In the context of Karvalo, knowledge does not reside with academic institutions. Instead, knowledge is co-constructed with multiple persons from a variety of backgrounds - Karvalo as the educated scientist and Ponnayya as the uneducated hunter. The ways in which knowledge is co-constructed collectively opens up a potential ontological way of creating decentralized knowledge for rural empowerment whereby engaging in intellectual/scientific pursuits is an undertaking that is available for everyone rather than elites.

4. DATA COLLECTION AND METHODOLOGY

This study is an exploration of Karvalo and involves a close reading of the text. The exploration will highlight specific scenes, dialogues, and character relationships to unpack the significance of these various dimensions of the text in relation to the theme of empowerment. Contextualization will derive from secondary sources including academic journal articles, texts and essays of critical



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analysis of Tejaswi's writings, rural empowerment, and eco-criticism. In addition, the study extends from academic inquiries pertaining to rural development and Indian literature to offer insight to the broader narrative in Tejaswi's text and also the impact of rural life and empowerment in contemporary Indian society.

The primary source of data will be the text itself, with the secondary sources providing theoretical understanding and context to the outcomes. Qualitative data analysis will consist of identifying themes of rural empowerment and wonder that consistently were present throughout the narrative, and their examination in relation to the behaviours, motives, and relationships of the characters.

5. LIMITATIONS

While this study provides a comprehensive treatment of the rural empowerment theme in Karvalo, it does have limitations with respect to the range of texts that it draws from. We view the focus on Karvalo as a negative, while comparative literature with other Kannada or Indian regional literature would provide further contexts on rural empowerment perspectives. Secondly, as this research has been primarily a literary study based on an analysis of one work, the findings of this study may not be extrapolatable to all of Tejaswi's writings or other rural narratives in Kannada literature.

1. Thematic Analysis

The theme of rural empowerment in Karvalo emerges as a rich and complicated exploration of a theme that involves thinking, caring about the land, and developing knowledge together with the natural environment. K.P. Poornachandra Tejaswi's novel, Karvalo, disrupts static notions about living in a rural manner, and develops characters who are empowered not by something external. Their empowerment comes from an internal sense of who their land is and how they want to Develop intellectual and practical knowledge. In this thematic analysis, we examine how Karvalo provides the reader with a vision of rural empowerment through the development of its characters, its narrative device, and its binary engagement of the natural and the constructed, or the role of science and community.

Karvalo's character Karvalo is a scientist, who embarks on a quest to find *Draco dussumieri*, another species of flying lizard. Karvalo's treatment of the Western Ghats is more than a scientific journey; it is representative of the realms of empowerment of the intellectual and of the rural. The rural characters, in this case, the narrator and Ponnayya, the hunter who join the journey, becoming part of the exploration, not as spectators to the process of knowledge being produced in this region in the name of science, but as players in the process of discovery also.

Karvalo doesn't even think of the villagers as ignorant or backward, as he is a trained scientist. Instead, he cooperates with them, in the understanding that their extensive knowledge of their land and wildlife, and knowledge of their natural cycles, cannot be underestimated in the quest for scientific knowledge. The empowerment of rural people is enacting their knowledge and relationship with nature and science, but also involves enabling rural people to take part in intellectual and



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scientific ventures. By engaging rural characters with complex scientific ideas, Tejaswi is in fact re-defining and challenging the binary of rural and urban intellectuality. Karvalo shows that intellectual curiosity does not only belong to urban spaces; rather it is a shared human endeavor, and part of our human existence is to engage intellectually, irrespective of one's social or academic status.

This approach to scientific inquiry reflects a wider agenda of democratic knowledge construction. Through the collaborative nature of the expedition, Tejaswi argues that scientific knowledge is not the province of an elite few, but can and should be shared with and by the community. In this way, the rural characters are empowered by virtue of their participation in a process of intellectual discovering in which their experience and local knowledge are fundamental to scientific discovery.

2. Nature as a Catalyst for Empowerment

Karvalo is characterized by the way in which nature, as well as the Western Ghats, is treated in the novel, not only as a setting, but as another character in the narrative. Nature does not simply serve as a backdrop. Nature, particularly the Western Ghats, serves as an engine for empowerment. Represented through rich biodiversity, the Western Ghats serves characters both as an obstacle to be challenged and an opportunity for exploration. The journey into the forest to locate the Draco lizard begins a metaphor for the journey into self-awareness and empowerment.

The character's relationship with the natural environment demonstrates an eco-critical sensibility, in which nature is connected with human activity. If we examine the characters as they move through the forest, we find they are deeply paying attention to everything around them: the plants and animals, learning and evolving with their surroundings. This interaction with the natural world provides a new set of information and experiences, the characters had access to before. In addition, the forest does not represent a dangerous or unknown wilderness, but offers understanding, normalization, and as the place where human understanding and nature's understanding are indistinguishable.

The rural character's empowerment are also connected to their awareness of ecological limits. The novel articulates in rural places such as Karvalo that only way to achieve empowerment is to realize the worth of land, resource, and living creatures not to diminish it but, live in community with them. In Karvalo, the villagers respond to the place with knowledge and with a reverence to Nature, this awareness gives the villagers an opportunity of empowerment by responding as protectors of their world, not mere users of a resource.

3. Intellectual and Ethical Empowerment through Collaboration

The recognition of collective empowerment, from an intellectual and ethical perspective, is another central theme in Karvalo. The relationship between Karvalo, the scientist, and Ponnayya, the hunter, embodies this empowerment. The two characters no longer hold significantly different educational and social positions; instead, they work together as colleagues to acquire knowledge. The radical thinking shown by Karvalo who respects the hunter's experiential form of knowledge and Ponnayya



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who provides valuable experience of the natural world exposes stark power relationships based on educational hierarchy.

The relationship between the urban scientist and the rural hunter asserts power across these structural roles. As we see urban intellectuals, and roles associated with education, we can grow together with rural understanding. Social power is not lost to any one individual. Both characters realize this in valuing each other. What Tejaswi is suggesting with the partnership between an urban intellectual and a rural learning experience, is rural empowerment does not emerge from higher power notions of empowerment but through working together with respect.

The rural characters' empowerment in Karvalo has moral connotations also. The characters are not simply seeking knowledge for knowledge's sake; they are also motivated by a sense of stewardship for the environment and all of the creatures that they meet along the way. Their relationships with entities throughout the novel have moral dimensions to them -- scientific discovery but also paying attention and acting upon a sense of moral responsibility or stewardship. So, it is essential to consider the ethical dimension of the empowerment process in Karvalo. It is not simply enough to be able to obtain knowledge; the empowerment process also includes living ethically with self-awareness, intention, and moral boundaries.

4. Rural Empowerment as a Philosophical Journey

The theme of rural empowerment involves scientific investigation and ecological advising, but it can also venture into the realm of the philosophical. The journey of the characters represents just as much a journey of self-knowledge as it is a journey of external discovery. The plot is filled with existential questions about life and purpose. The expedition to find the Draco lizard becomes emblematic of the characters' internal search for meaning, where empowerment does not entail the simple gathering of facts but rather a more profound understanding of one's position in the universe (i.e. there is not an objective measure of significance, one simply chooses to view it as significant).

Tejaswi's exploration of rural empowerment is thus philosophical emphasizing self-awareness, and reflection. The characters' transformations are as important as the scientific and ecological discoveries they make. And in this regard, rural empowerment not only encompasses changing the external conditions of rural life, but also enriching the internal circumstances of rural life as the outcomes of their experiences that lead to enhanced wisdom and a more harmonious relationship with the environment.

This analysis has outlined how the representation of rural empowerment in Karvalo, is an enriching process that involves scientific investigation and ecological awareness, along with collaborative knowledge production and philosophical reflection. The novel takes a non-conventional approach to rural life by illustrating a more complex and holistic representation of how empowerment relates to the ecological implications of rural life.



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6. CONCLUSION

K.P. Poornachandra Tejaswi's novel *Karvalo* presents a lively and thrilling view of rural empowerment moving on from the conventional aspects of rural representation as habitually impoverished or subjugated. The approach to empowerment in the novel is derived not from political or economic frameworks, but rather intellectual engagement, ecological awareness, and how to participate as a community. Through the characters' expedition, ultimately, through the Western Ghats, and their collective movement towards scientific knowledge, Tejaswi, in *Karvalo*, presents rural empowerment as a process that is holistic, communicative, and place-based the experience of the rural people.

Central to Tejaswi's representation in *Karvalo* is the pristine depiction of the rural characters as producers of scientific knowledge as opposed to the usual, passive receivers of knowledge. *Karvalo*, the experienced and trained urban scientist, and Ponnayya, the rural hunter, represent the nature of rural empowerment as contingent upon the collaboration of knowledges that bolster participation and knowledge sharing. The collaboration of the two men surfaces as part of a collective, bridging rural and urban collaborations while claiming the rural participants as intellectually capable and a sort of scientists themselves. As such, the rural empowerment of the characters is less about political and economic sovereignty, and more about their capacity to participate in the intellectual realm as rural individuals that contributes and shares knowledge, while bridging the divide between urban knowledge and rural knowledge. Tejaswi's ability to tell a story of rural empowerment, where collaborative, inclusive production of knowledge is a priority, is fundamental to his construct of empowerment.

The novel also stresses ecological consciousness as key to the empowerment process. The Western Ghats are the context for empowerment and the site of the characters' shared sense of agency. Time-and-place-specific biodiversity and complex ecology of the Western Ghats serve as the backdrop for the intellectual and ethical development of the characters embodied in their experiences of revelation in the forest. Nature, contained in the voice of the narrator, is a principal actor in the empowerment journey, rather than a static backdrop. As the characters express appreciable reverence and understanding for the people and ecological context, they demonstrate the nature of ecological stewardship necessary for sustainable rural empowerment. The novel portrays that agency and empowerment cannot exist outside of a relationship with the land; that true empowerment cannot occur without figuring out how to live with and respect both the land and the original ecosystems incorporated in their life support systems.

In addition, *Karvalo* also offers empowerment as a kind of philosophical journey beyond mere knowledge repositories. The experience of being in the forest, observations of nature, and conversations about life and meaning provide a deeper understanding of the character's places in the world. In this way, Tejaswi notes that embodying empowerment requires more than just recognition of external circumstances; but also requires the immediacy of self-awareness as intellectual growth and environmental ontology. The narrative suggests that empowerment is a process of



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transformation, both externally and internally, into a more integrated, reflective, and ethical way of being, collectively and as a society.

In short, Karvalo provides a narrative model of what rural empowerment can be that critiques the typical stories of rural stagnancy or dependency. Tejaswi's view of rural village life as a context of empiricism, ecological etiquette, and personally meaningful harvesting of the life experience reflects the subtleties and forward-looking nature of empowerment. The novel suggests that rural communities when nurtured by intellectually literate engagement and ecologically responsible pragmatic life affirmative living can not only transform their own lives but participate collectively contributing to the social knowledge bank and to the health of society.

Karvalo is a particular and significant contribution to Kannada literature as it is an inventive mix of rural realist representation of human experience, eco-critical engagement of critique, and literative dialogue. The novel facilitates a new representation of the village as primarily a site of possibility not restricted by economically, politically, socially, and culturally impoverished assumptions, as the issue of 'empowerment' may not arise from reliance upon others accompanying intervention practices, but rather from the intellectual, ethical, and ecological capacities within the domains of the rural experience. Tejaswi's novel Karvalo thus meaningfully engages with the discussions regarding the supposed need for rural empowerment in India - and, importantly, demonstrates how literature can stand as an initiator for reconceptualizing not only the social structures of a varied human experience but also human relationships associated with the protectable complexities of other than human, non-human beings and nature.

7. AUTHOR(S) CONTRIBUTION

The writers affirm that they have no connections to, or engagement with, any group or body That provides financial or non-financial assistance for the topics or resources covered in this Manuscript.

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The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, And/or publication of this article.

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