

LITERATURE AND ENVIRONMENT

▶ UNIT I - ECOCRITICISM THEORY

- ▶ Detailed : Cherryl Glotfelty: “Literary Studies in an Age of Environmental Crisis” J. Scott Bryson’s ‘Introduction’ from *Eco poetry*
- ▶ T. V. Reed’s “Towards an Environmental Justice Ecocriticism”

▶ UNIT II - POETRY

- ▶ Detailed : William Wordsworth’s Hart-Leap Well
- ▶ Dilip Chitre’s Felling of the Banyan Tree
- ▶ W .S. Merwin’s For a Coming Extinction
- ▶ Gary Snyder’s LMFBR
- ▶ Don McKay’s Song for the Songs of the Blue Jay
- ▶ Mary Oliver’s Sleeping in the Forest

▶ **UNIT III - PROSE**

- ▶ Detailed : Edward Abbey's "Watching the Birds: The Wind Hover" from *Down the River*.
- ▶ Non-Detailed : Vandana Shiva's "Women's Indigenous Knowledge and Biodiversity Conservation"

▶ **UNIT IV - DRAMA**

- ▶ Detailed : Mahasweta Devi's *Water*

▶ **UNIT V - FICTION**

- ▶ Non-Detailed : Tania James' *The Tusk that Did the Damage*
- ▶ Ambikasutan Mangad's *Swarga* Trans. J. Devika

LITERARY STUDIES IN AN AGE OF ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS

Cheryll Glotfelty

Introduction:

Literary studies has been with a constant change due to the changes in the field. There is no proper ecological approach to literature although research says that it has responded to prevailing or contemporary pressures, but it has ignored the environmental crisis. The modern education has been limiting itself to race, class, and gender which were the hot topics of the twentieth century. Many never knew the earth at all unless and until one heard about oil spills, toxic waste contamination, extinction of species, battles over public land use, growing hole in the ozone layer.

In spite of all this, the literary research beside all these environmental issues was lagging scope when others fields like history, philosophy, law and religion were making some progress. Various studies also appeared under headings such as regionalism, pastoralism, human ecology, science and literature, nature in literature etc. There was a disunity when this was created where the critics rarely cited one another's work. Each critic was developing his own environmental approach. As a consequence eco-criticism did not become a presence in the major institutions of power in the profession.

BIRTH OF ENVIRONMENTAL LITERARY STUDIES:

In the mid-eighties scholars with collaborative projects planted the literary studies and in early nineties it grew up. In 1985 Frederick O. Waage edited *Teaching Environmental Literature: Materials, Methods, Resources* which was a great presence if environmental concern and awareness. In 1992 , a new Association for Study of Literature and Environment was formed with Scott Slovic elected as first president and in 1995 it had 750 members to host its first conference. Patrick Murphy had launched a journal *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*

Definition of Ecocriticism:

Ecocriticism is the relationship between literature and physical environment. It is an earth-centred approach to literary studies. Ecocriticism was possibly coined by William Rueckert in his essay "Literature and Ecology" Some critics prefer the term ecocriticism because it is short and can be easily made as ecocritical or ecocritic. Additionally they favour eco over enviro- because ecocriticism studies about human culture and physical world. Enviro- means anthropocentric whereas eco can be termed as biocentric.

The Three Stages in the Growth of Ecocriticism:

First stage is when the stereotypes are identified - Eden, Arcadia, virgin land, swamp, and savage wilderness. When absences are noticed: Where is the natural world in this text? But nature alone is not the only focus of ecocritical studies of representation. Other topics also include the frontier, animals, specific geographical regions, rivers, mountains and many more.

The second stage is the growth of nature oriented through Henry Thoreau, John Burroughs, John Muir, Mary Austin, Aldo Leopold, and many others. Nature writing boasts a rich past, a vibrant present, and a promising future. This stage also includes identifying fiction and poetry writers whose works manifests ecological awareness. Figures like Willa Cather, Robinson Jeffers, W.S. Merwin and many more have received much attention.

In the third stage ecocriticism has branched out into areas like deep ecology and ecofeminism.

Future of Ecocriticism :

Ecocriticism aims at achieving the following targets in future:

- **Consciousness Raising**

Ecocriticism is a **Consciousness Raising** phenomenon about environment.

- **Specialist in Literature Department**

There should be atleast one specialist scholar in every department to take the area forward.

- **Multi Ethnic Movement**

It will become a multi ethnic movement when stronger connections are made between the environment and issues of Social Justice.

- **Prescribing environmentally oriented texts for Composition Courses**

- **One-inter disciplinary Course: Students should be encouraged to take up inter-disciplinary course.**

- **Using Recycled paper**

- **Hosting Conferences**

Essays in this collection:

There are three sections in this book reflecting three major phases:

1. First section aims to raise fundamental questions on the relation between nature and culture. And to provide a theoretical foundation to built the subsequent discussion of literary works.
2. Second section, focuses on the representation of nature in fiction and drama.
3. Final section is focused on the environmental literature in America.(native American stories and Thoreauvian nature of writing tradition.

Important Essays in Ecocriticism:

- “The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis” by Lynn White, Jr. White claims that the environmental crisis is fundamentally a matter of the beliefs and value that direct the technology and science. He blames that Judeo-christian religion for the anthropocentric arrogance and dominant attitude towards the nature.
- In "Nature and Silences" by Christopher Manes he uses the theory of Micheal Foucault to show how nature has been made silent in Western discourse.
- William Rueckert coined the new term "ecocriticism" i.e, discover something about the ecology of literature". He describes poem as a stored energy. Also adds that reading transfers this energy through the mediators (critics and teachers) between poetry and the biosphere.

Conclusion:

Thus, ecocriticism has become an established area in the realm of literary studies and it is here to stay.



Environmental Justice Poetics

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The world that was handed down to us was filled with limitless beauty, elixirine water, fertile soil and life giving air. Now man has turned it into a toxic spewing hell.











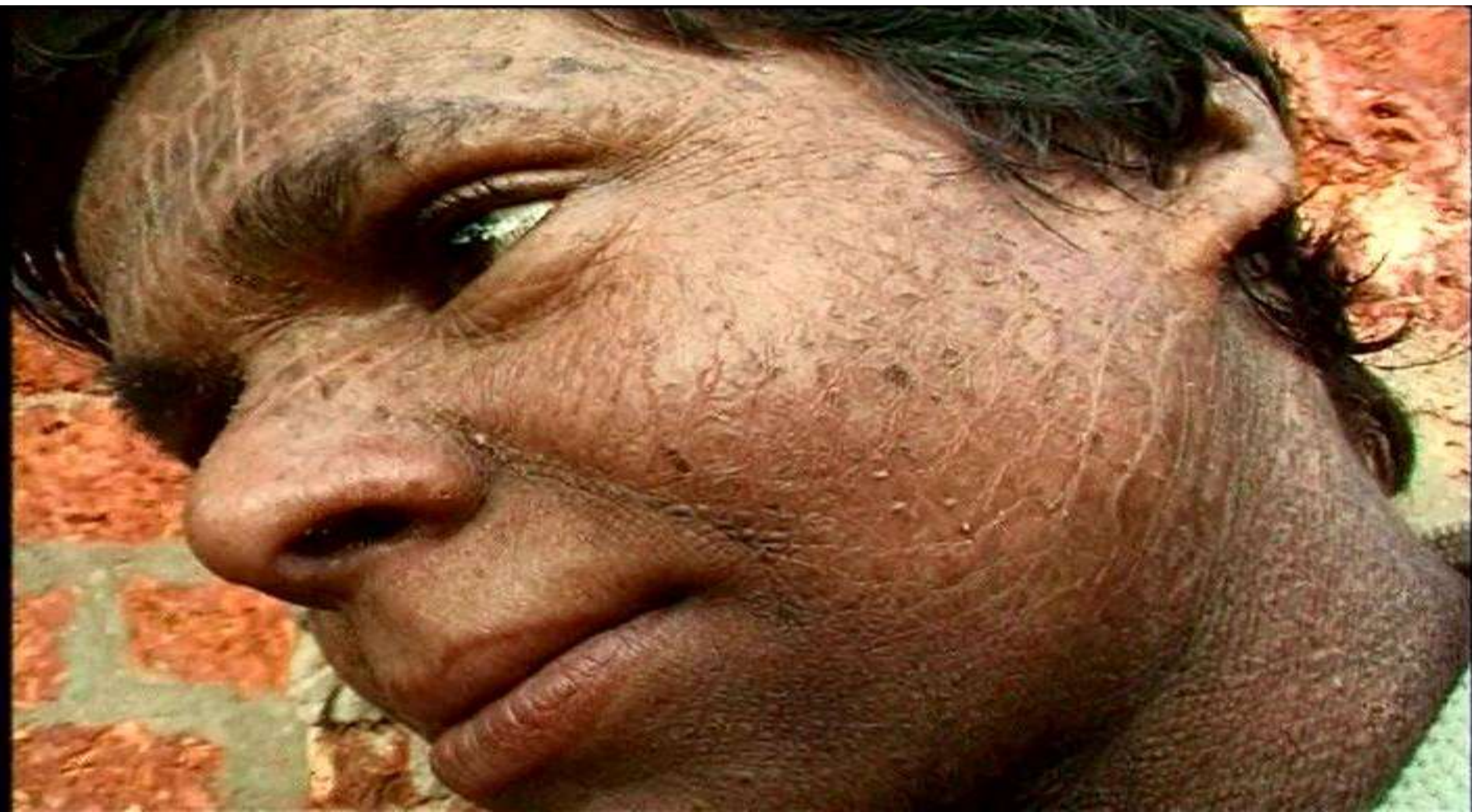


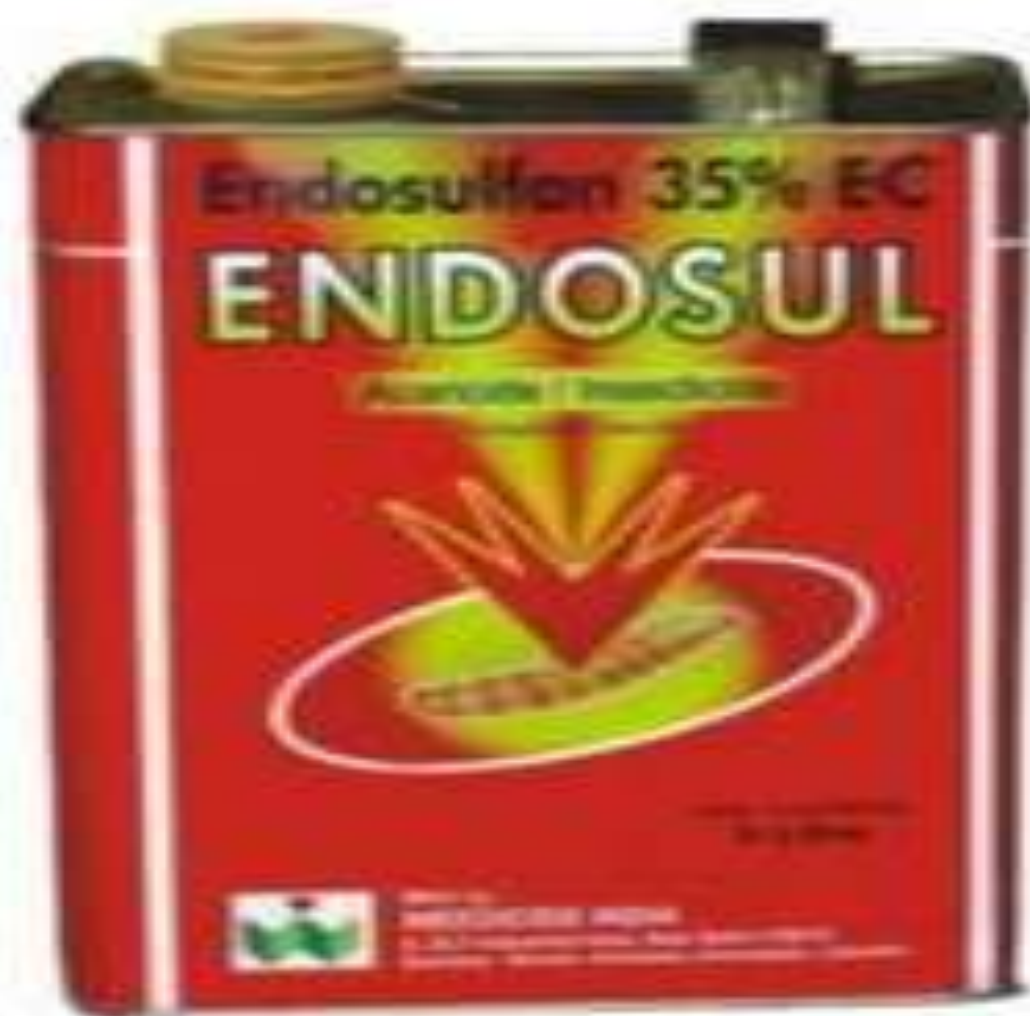
















The Text

- Ambigasudan Mangad's *Enmahaje*. Trans. Sirpi Balasubramaniam. Kavitha: Pollachi, 2009.
- A war between capitalism and humanity
- A war between greed and sustenance
- A war that will turn the entire earth a graveyard
- Enmahaje documents the above fear
- A book that shocks the conscience
- Induces just anger in the reader

The Place

- Enmahaje located in Kasarkod dist., North Kerala
- A place of hills and rivers “Nature at its indulgent best”
- The nature of the rivers in Enmahaje
- 1000s of waterholes
- Sorgam: Gold yielding land
- Peacocks, parrots and vultures (that could carry dogs)
- Snakes and tigers worshipped
- Snake shrines and conservation
- Eight different languages and eight customs
- The Jains and their customs
- The Present?

The Present : Flora

- Invaluable forests teeming with biodiversity destroyed
- Monocrop culture: a terror unleashed by govt.
- In Karnataka-Eucalyptus, Himalayas-Pine, Kerala-Acacia
- Why in the name of afforestation, this foreign species?
- In the land of jack fruit and mango, why this killer tree?
- Yield reduced. Plants no longer healthy. Many rot fast.

The Present: Fauna

- No fish, snake, frog, peacock
- Not a drop of honey in the forests
- The last monkey Sugreevan
- Neelakandan's fear: Two occasions: "What if there is no earthworm too?"
- Crab, "What have you done to all the creatures that faced bravely the struggle for survival on this earth?"
- Cattle with three legs


A Biodiversity Disaster

- Study by Dr. V. S. Vijayan of Salim Ali Foundation
- Enmahaje Panchayat's biodiversity: Nilgiri langur, tiger, jackal, wild boar, jungle cat, mouse deer, mongoose, squirrels, flying fox, black naped hare, sparrow, parakees, crows, frogs, honey bees, snails
- Everything except human beings disappeared during the spray
- Dead carcasses in plantations
- Fish : Worst affected
- Absence of crows and the aftermath

The Present : Humans

- Parikshit: 7, Body with blisters, greying hair, can make only croaking sounds
- Bagyalakshmi: 13, tongue lolling out
- Anwar: 26, fingers and toes like tentacles
- Abilash: resembles a monkey in appearance and gestures
- Anju: urinary bladder hangs out
- Sujith: 8, with brittle bones
- Haritha: advancing mental derangement ending in suicide
- Mamta: Haritha's sister also afflicted
- Mentally retarded children chained to posts
- Scores of patients at the medical camp

The Cause

- Aerial spraying of Endosulphan in 5000 hectares in Kasarkod
 - For 23 years from 1978 to 2001
 - To protect crop from tea mosquito
 - The toxic rain sprayed on the hills ran down to mix with streams, rivers throwing open the doors of hell.
 - Organo chlorine remains in the soil
 - Physical and mental disorders
 - Known cases of death all over the world
 - Breast milk: 22.4ppm, blood: 196.4ppm
 - 900 times above permissible limit
 - Butter has endosulphate
 - How much ppm endosulphan in this jack fruit?
 - Modified DNA and the recurring consequences for 50 yrs.
- 
- A small, light-colored aircraft is shown in flight, viewed from a low angle. It is releasing a thick, white spray that extends forward and slightly downward, covering a portion of the green, hilly landscape below. The background consists of dense green vegetation and hills under a bright sky.

The Comparison

- We have heard of Nuclear Holocaust in Hiroshima. A similar bomb is blasted here. The effect percolates little by little.

The Irony

- When there are no living creatures, how will the tea mosquito alone survive?
- In order to kill the non-existent pest, poison worth crores of rupees is dumped in this region

The Law

- Precautionary measures:
- Protective gear, covering water bodies, mornings, announcements to be made, doctors to be sensitized.
- Same insecticide not to be used for more than three years.
- None of the above criteria followed
- Bans in US, Bangladesh and Britain

The Locals' Interpretation

- Firm belief: Jadathari's anger and curse. None can escape
- Man-made disasters as fate
- Damodar Shetty on Haritha's death: Voodoo and witchcraft
- Poor, innocent, uneducated and marginalized
- 25 yrs. to realize the real curse is the poison
- Benign and peace-loving like cows
- Unlike urban dwellers who invite diseases with degraded lifestyles who can also find cures
- Saradha doesn't have money to buy rice. How can she afford five surgeries to cure her daughter?
- Why are these children wronged? The parents who wait for God's grace did not err in any way

What is Environmental Justice (EJ)?

- Lawrence Buell, “EJ is community based resistance against toxification of local environment. It broadens the scope of environmentalism to include the basic needs of poor and politically less powerful groups.”
- Dorceta E. Taylor, “EJ integrates both social and ecological concerns”
- Oppression and social exploitation is inseparable from rape and exploitation of natural environment. Health of one depends on the other.
- EJ Paradigm: The right of all individuals to be protected from environmental degradation.
- EJ aims to redress the disproportionate incidence of environmental contamination in communities of the poor.

Environmental Racism

- Racial discrimination in environmental policy making and the enforcement of regulations and laws, the deliberate targeting of people of colour communities for toxic waste facilities, the official sanctioning of the life threatening presence of poisons and pollutants and the history of excluding people of colour from the environmental movement.
- “We all live on the same planet but we don’t breathe in the same air. Some environments are more equal than others”
- Communities living in sacrifice zones
- Risk burdens localized but benefits generalized
- Disparities created, tolerated and institutionalized by local, state and government action

Dimensions of EJ

- Converting rivers into ditches and uninhibited sand mining
- Cultivation lands converted to residential plots
- Uncontrolled pollution from industries
- Building of dams in tribal lands
- Their habitats sold to industrialists for their mineral wealth

EJ Movements in India

- Bhopal Gas Tragedy: Methyl Isocyanate Poisoning
- Deaths : 3,000- 8000; 8000 later deaths
- The Continuing Struggle for justice
- The Ticking Bomb: GAIL's 3,000 cr. Pipeline project through the agricultural fields of Coimbatore, Erode, Salem, Krishnagiri to Bangalore.
- More than 1,20,000 fruit bearing trees would have to be uprooted for laying the pipes
- Demand: change the alignment of pipeline
- Collectors directed to firmly enforce law.

Environmental Justice Criticism

- Ecocriticism puts human figures at the margin
- EJ Criticism : T.V. Reed: “To foster new work that understands and elaborates the crucial connection between environmental concerns and social justice in the context of ecocriticism”
- What can EJ Criticism Do?
- Focus on texts that show how environmental degradation and hazards affect the poor.
- How has the class divide lead to greater environmental irresponsibility.
- How can worker safety and environmental safety be brought together?
- Foregrounding texts written by the coloured and the Third World writers
- EJ criticism adds a new dimension to ecocriticism

Enmahaje as an EJ Text

- Novel a refraction of historical actualities
- The poor and the innocent targeted
- The officials do not drink water or tender coconut from Enmahaje
- Records accurately the problem, the affected communities and their struggle for justice
- Double victimization of Muthalamada endosulfan victims
- 188 living victims; 77 chronically ill
- “As poor Dalit and tribal coolie workers, we remain unorganized. Struggling even to get a decent pay for the hard work in farm lands, we are incapable of organising a Kasarkod model struggle”, Chandran to The Hindu
- The deadly manual spray
- NHRC sought an exclusive report

Silent Spring and *Enmahaje*

- A resonance of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962)
- Documented the detrimental effects of DDT on the environment.
- The ban in 1972
- Neelakandan's mantra pieced the silence of nature: "*Nisaptham poonda iyarkaiyai nookip painthu paraviyathu*"

The Struggle

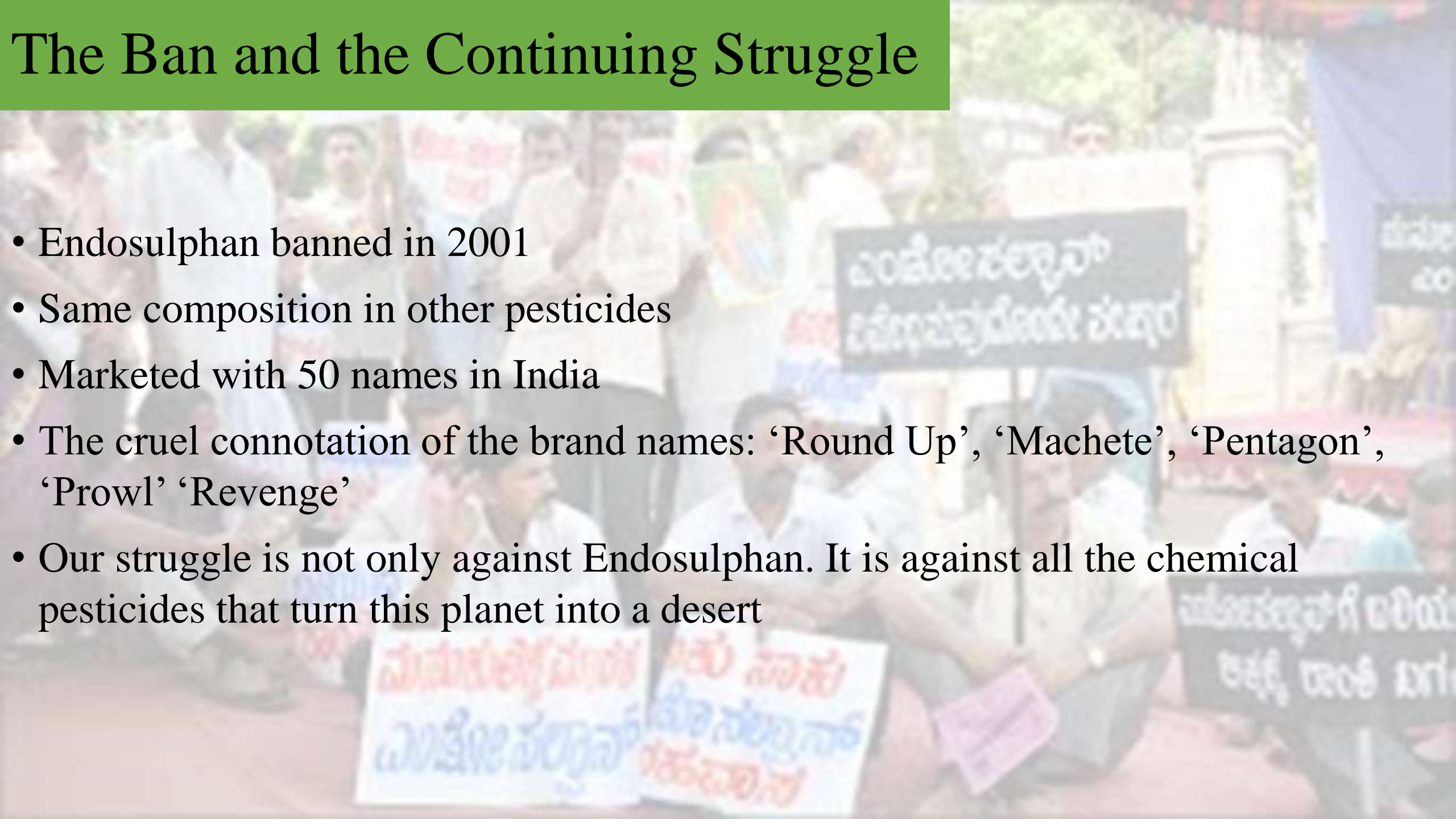
- Neelakandan, the embittered social activist and his partner Devi
- Jayarajan, the environmental enthusiast, who pays with his life
- Dr. Arunkumar, who sacrifices bright career to serve the poor
- Sriramar, freelance journalist, farmer
- Prakasa, first mentions the link between spray and death of bees
- Leelakumari, the former official, left paralysed
- Formation of Endosulphan Spray Protest Action Committee (ESPAC)
- The initial victory
- The schemes of the “leader” and the minister
- The medical camp
- Affected children as exhibits
- Parikshit’s body taken as a procession
- Jayarajan collects evidence but is murdered

The Apathy

- The interpretation for insecticide
- Endosulphan sprayed in govt. owned plantations by govt. What can anyone do about it?
- Enquiry commissions submit reports without visiting affected areas
- Twist tales and give clean chit to Endosulphan
- Lab reports meddled with
- Deformities attributed to consanguineous marriages
- Activists threatened arrested on false charges and tortured
- Jayarajan brutally murdered

The Ban and the Continuing Struggle

- Endosulphan banned in 2001
- Same composition in other pesticides
- Marketed with 50 names in India
- The cruel connotation of the brand names: 'Round Up', 'Machete', 'Pentagon', 'Prowl' 'Revenge'
- Our struggle is not only against Endosulphan. It is against all the chemical pesticides that turn this planet into a desert



Facts about the Struggle

- Only in Mid 1990s people saw the connection
- Media visibility
- Numerous marches and protests
- Medha Pathkar and Arundhati Roy
- Slogan, “Endosulfan Quit India”
- The Hindu 3rd Feb. 2016: Another round of talks with CM. Laxity in implementing the National Human Rights Commission recommendations. Apathy of banks
- Endosulfan Virudha Samyukta Samara Samithy : deteriorating health of victims as they brave the scorching heat.



Enmahaje as Faction

- The Fantasy elements
- The surrealist moments
- The cultural constructs
- The cave as Noah's Arc
- When the poisonous apocalyptic rain strikes *Enmahaje*, all the remaining living creatures will take refuge and live in the cave. Until the rain stops.
- Text as a tool

The Solution

- Pesticides and insecticides to be replaced by herbicides
- Green Revolution and its environmental costs
- Environmentalists need to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor
- Responsibility to rehabilitate the victims
- Preserve the richness and fertility of the soil for the coming generations.



The Future

Thasaputhro samovabi

Thasapapi samovirutha

Thasaviruthu samamatha

Thasamathaya samathadu

One pond is equal to ten sons

One lake is equal to ten ponds

One mother is equal to ten lakes

One tree is equal to ten mothers

So, one tree is equal to ten thousand sons