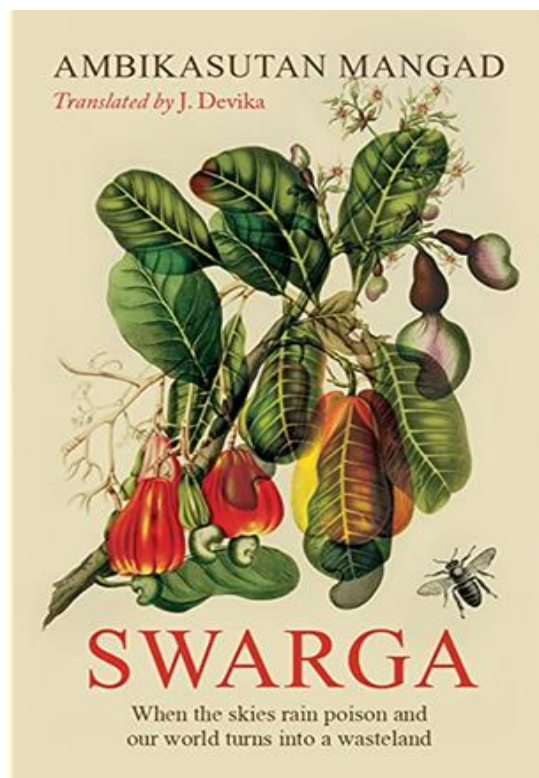


AMBIKASUTAN MANGAD S WARGA

TRANS J. DEVIKA



▶ ***AUTHOR'S NOTE***

- **Ambikasutan Mangad is an award winning writer and public intellectual in Kerala.**
- **He published several collections of short stories, two novels, four volumes of literary criticism and a dictionary of folk idioms.**
- **He is active in the anti-endosulfan struggle in northern Kerala and has written widely on the issue.**
- **He currently works at Nehru College, Kanhangad, as the head of the Department of Malayalam.**

▶ **TRANSLATOR**

- **J. Devika is a feminist historian and an acclaimed translator of contemporary Malayalam literature.**
- **She works as a teacher and researcher at the Centre for Development Studies in Thiruvananthapuram.**





► **BACKGROUND OF SWARGA**

- People of the northern district of Kerala are fighting the authorities and the business magnates, trying to protect the land and their living, against a deadly chemical Endosulfan.
- Enmakaje, a small village in Kasargod, becomes a symbol of the resistance of the movement against EndoSulfan.

The insects, the cattle, the reptiles, the birds one after the other, either disappear or migrate.

Those who continued to live in the area suffered the most. Kids born with deformities, people die of mysterious diseases, increase in the number of people with mental illness.

But the authorities demand concrete evidence, facts and results of analysis. The 'fact finding missions' of Governmental agencies returns with reports showing lack of evidence.

It is this issue that forms the background to this novel by Ambikasuthan Mangad.

CHARACTERS

Neelakandan (Leading character - Storyline runs along his life)

Devayani (companion of Neelakandan- initially a prostitute but later half becomes loyal to Neelakandan- travels along with Neelakandan)

- Srirama (the one who strives to ban EndoSulfan.)
- Panji (the Moopar or the head of tribe - also called the Vaidyar)
- Leader (the one behind the spraying of EndoSulfan for his profit)
- Dr. Arun Kumar



AERIAL SPRAY OF ENDOSULFAN

SUMMARY OF SWARGA

Ambikasuthan's Enmakaje is a place of hills. Enmakaje is also a place of languages, not one or two but near a dozen. Apart from 'Tulu', Malayalam, Kannada, Konkani, there are Marathi settlers (Naiks) , Arab speaking people and Byari prominent in Enmakaje. There are numerous "steps of truth" around that place. Once you are on those steps, you have to tell the truth and only truth.

They believe that you will not be able to come down from these steps if you are a liar. Enmakaje is also a place of water ,making it land fertile. There are no wells in the village as the water is abundant for every house. The government controlled and ran "Plantation Corporation" and converted a substantial part of the natural flora into Cashew Plantation. The trouble started when the corporation started spraying the pesticide known as "Endosulfan" .

The ecological balance of the village is damaged. As mentioned before, people started dying of mysterious diseases. Kids were born with damaged limbs or other physical ailments. The number of mental patients have gone up beyond the normal rates of other places. There are protests and agitations, and typical in such cases across the globe, these were crushed by the use of power. There were multiple committees and study groups sponsored by the government (and hence by the Pesticide Lobby) which always returned with reports giving 'Endo-Sulfan' a restriction.

- **Even 'breast milk' samples, which is considered to be the purest food, was found poisonous. The impacts are also huge on the flora of the area. There are no insects any more. Birds aren't seen. The resistive movements are active with many NGO organisations, but never been able to make any headway. The workers are threatened by the mighty and was haunted by the authorities.**
- **Neelakantan and Devayani arrived there, looking for peace escaping from every human contact they ever had. He had a shelter for every one who is in need at Thiruvananthapuram. From lepers, to old people, injured to prostitutes every one found his house their home. Devayani, reached his place and stayed on. Their encounter with the reality was accidental. The kid came into their life after Devayani found his parents hanging from the ceiling and the abandoned kids' silent cry made her bring him home.**
- **Neelakantan was angry, he did not want anyone else in their life, he reacted violently, ran out of home to the hill and jungle. The kid was silent, it made some sounds when in pain and hungry. The wounds on his body did not dry up. It is the tribal chief and doctor 'Panchi' who explained the cases to them. He is not a kid, but did not grow. There are many kids similar , some with missing limbs since birth, some with tongue hanging outside unable to put them in, some crippled and many with mental illness. To them , it is the curse of the hill .**
- **The 'jadadhari hills' had a curse on the people and they are suffering this for their ancestors misdeeds. A chance meeting with the Doctor, gave him insights to the issues of Endo-Sulfan. Hurt and sad, and his inability to cure and save the boy, drags him into the action scene from his self inflicted isolation from the society. Protesting in front of the Plantation corporation with the body of the dead child, and attacking and disrupting the helicopter which came in to spray the next round of pesticides, Neelakantan and the group started the resistance in a small way. Typical to such teams, they too were soon branded as 'naxalites' and were arrested and tortured along with another activist. here are characters typical to a cinema story. The minister, who has no time for the people, the local leader who has all the power and fan fare, the good fellow medical practitioner, the freelance press reporter, the group of silent victims ; each playing their parts in their own way.**

CULTURE AND MYTHOLOGY IN SWARGA

- **Story of Bhalakhiliyas**
- **The boothas**
- **Serpent**
- **Grove's**
- **Indra and Mahabali conversation**
- **Onam in Tulam in Swarga**
- **Name of Pareekshit from Hindu myth**
- **Stories of various caste and oval**



CULTURE AND MYTHOLOGY IN SWARGA

- **The novel exhibits several myths and cultural aspects in the storyline.**
- **We will find various stories about Mahabali in various parts of the novel.**
- **The celebration of Onam during Tulam season is something different in Swarga.**
- **We can find superstitions and cultural beliefs. For instance the curse of jadadhari bhoota.**
- **The stories about Garuda and the Bhalakhiliyas.**
- **And also the cave in which they find the majestic donkey - Bali himself.**
- **The myths of serpents and leopards**
- **And the deities they used to worship and believe. Also the Boothas.**
- **We also find the mystery of the land of swarga and many more instances.**



THEME & CONCLUSION

- ▶ **This was not a story of Enmakaje alone, but that of the other areas where the use of Endo-sulfan is prevalent spread across 7-8 villages in Kerala and a few in Karnataka.**
- ▶ **And also the corruption and social issues are brought into light**
- ▶ **The author has given more importance to out show the negligence of political leaders over the lives of the poor people on Enmakaje**
- **Despite the propaganda nature of the novel, Ambikasuthan Mangad has done a good job with his narration.**
- **The beautiful mixture of myths , legends and folklore into the story did help to take this into a different level.**
- **He uses the change of languages and tone effectively.**
- **None of the characters are deep or strong, and are very predictable. However, the book end fabulously.**

POLITICAL AND SOCIAL ASPECTS

- Ambikasutan Mangad's *Swarga* is a captivating book that takes the reader into a surreal world deep inside a forest.
- A couple has retreated from the world – breaking all their connections with humans and their pasts – by renouncing their names and identity and aiming to live a life of solitude.
- The pesticide is spread by aerial spraying on cashew plantations in Enmakaje, Kasargod district by the Plantation Corporation of Kerala (PCK).
- The book captures the human suffering from endosulfan poisoning and the struggle to ban endosulfan as a pesticide in north Kerala with a narrative style that weaves in imagination, folklore and mysticism, accompanied by scientific evidence.
- The writer says that there is no such insect and the company uses the insecticide only to increase the cashew yield.
- But the PCK and the government disregard the scientific evidence. Mangad also highlights the fact that paid researchers and scientists often defend companies that manufacture hazardous chemicals.
- Their network is all-pervasive and politicians, intellectuals, doctors and the bureaucracy get their share from the profits these companies make.

ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

- Neelakandan and Devayani lived their life through selling the baskets made out of branches to meet with their basic needs
- Devayani loved a man and he betrayed her for money by forcing her to become a prostitute
- People in the village were forced to work in Enosulfhan sprayed fields that had huge negative effect in their health that prolonged for generations
- People worked as coolies under politicians due to lack of money
- Rich become richer by huge yields of cashews by spraying Endosulfan and poor farmers suffered a lot physically and mentally.



GEOGRAPHICAL DIMENSIONS

- Environmental health problems vary from region to region, reflecting the geography, climate and the level of economic development.
- Kasaragod, the northern district of Kerala, is a lush region with large cashew plantations. The use of pesticides in the cashew plantations has resulted in long term negative impacts on the health of the people living in the vicinity of plantations as well as in remote regions.
- Neelakantan along with his soul mate Devayani, arrive at Swarga; which can be literally translated into heaven, a remote hamlet of Enmakaje in Kasaragod district.
- They had renounced the city, along with its comforts, turmoils, chaos, and unpleasant life marked by crimes and negligence; discarded their names and identities in order to retire to an austere and pious life, in the midst of exuberant flora and fauna in a remote area adjacent to the mythical Jadadhari hills.
- Authorities were exploiting the natives, who remained on the fringes, both in terms of geography and with regard to policy making and implementation.
- The author incorporates the philosophy of deep ecology propounded by Arne Naess, which believes in the interconnectedness of all life forms and natural features, and adheres to ecofeminist spirituality throughout the narrative, by retrieving old myths and religious beliefs in which nature was held in high esteem.



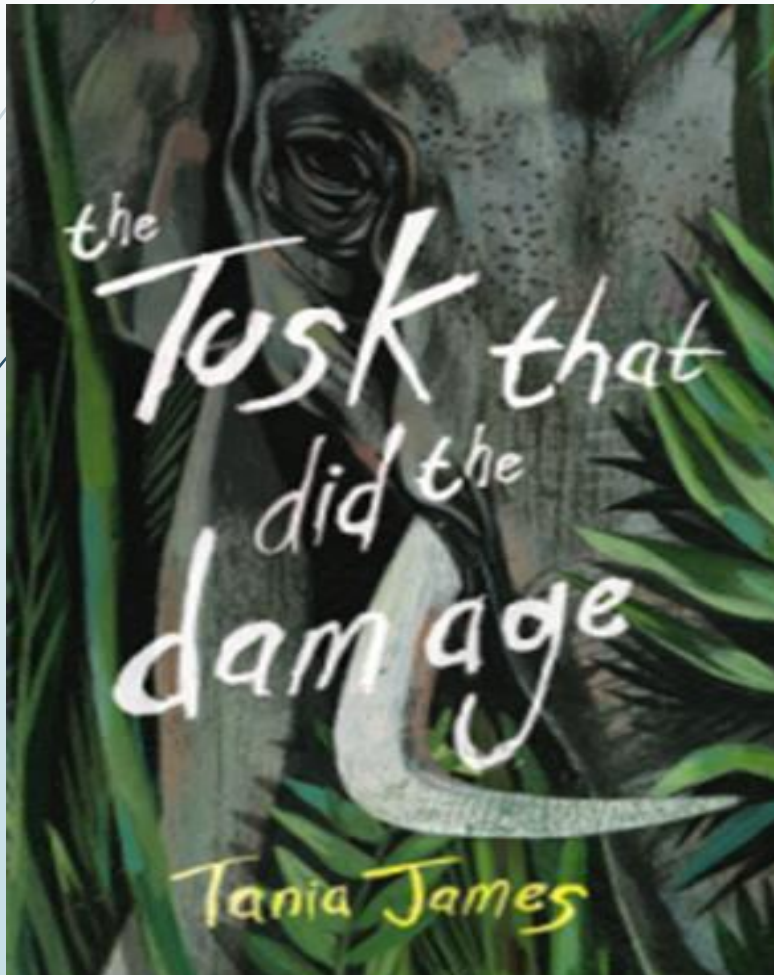




EMPOWERING PEOPLE FOR CHANGE



THE TUSK THAT DID THE DAMAGE- TANIA JAMES

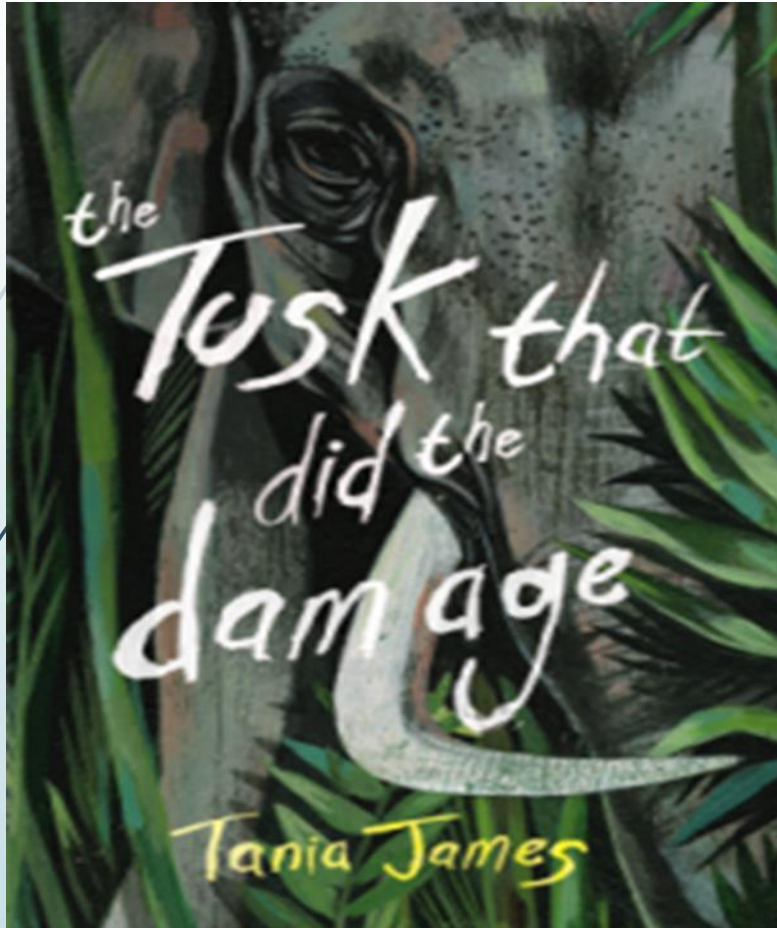


ABOUT THE AUTHOR



- ▶ TANIA JAMES is the author of the novel *Atlas of Unknowns* and the short-story collection *Aerogrammes*. Her fiction has appeared in *Boston Review*, *Granta*, *Guernica*, *One Story*, *A Public Space*, and *The Kenyon Review*. She lives in Washington, DC. James is a lyrical writer whose descriptions of the south Indian forest, with its nests of silky white orchids, silver oaks with smears of marigold, and shrieking macaques, provide the right mix of beauty and claustrophobia. And it's difficult not to be charmed by the Gravedigger's Proustian "scent-seeking periscope trunk", which recalls the salt licks and duckweed of his childhood, "the tang of river water, opening and closing around his feet", the purity of his animal intent.
- ▶ In her previous book, *Aerogrammes*, James explored the human-animal divide in a short story, "What to do with Henry", in which an American woman goes to Sierra Leone to find her husband's illegitimate daughter. There, she adopts the girl and a chimpanzee and brings them both back to Ohio, but is eventually forced to donate the chimp to a zoo. "By rescuing him, they had ruined him," James writes. This notion of do-gooding human intervention gone wrong echoes through *The Tusk That Did the Damage*.
- ▶ Born in 1980 and raised in Louisville, Ky., James attended Kentucky Day School and Harvard and then received her master of fine arts from Columbia. During her storied early career, she has landed contracts with Knopf, published her first book before age 30, won awards and fellowships and laudatory reviews.

ABOUT THE BOOK



- ▶ Published in 2015, *The Tusk that did the damage* is the new book by Tania James. This novel relies on three narrators, The Elephant, The Poacher, and The Filmmaker, who tell their stories in separate, succinct chapters throughout the book.
- ▶ *The Tusk That Did the Damage* is an utterly contemporary story about an ancient and majestic elephant, and his dangerous connection to the land and the people around him. Orphaned by poachers as a calf and sold into a life of labor, Gravedigger has broken free of his chains and is terrorizing the South Indian countryside. Caught up in the violence are the studious younger son of a rice farmer drawn into the sordid world of poaching; and a young American documentary filmmaker engaged in a risky affair with the veterinarian who is her subject. In three intertwined storylines—one of them narrated by the elephant himself—Tania James crafts a heartbreaking tale of the ivory trade, exploring the porous boundary between conservation and corruption. It is a wrenching exploration of love and betrayal, duty and loyalty, and the vexed relationship between man and nature.

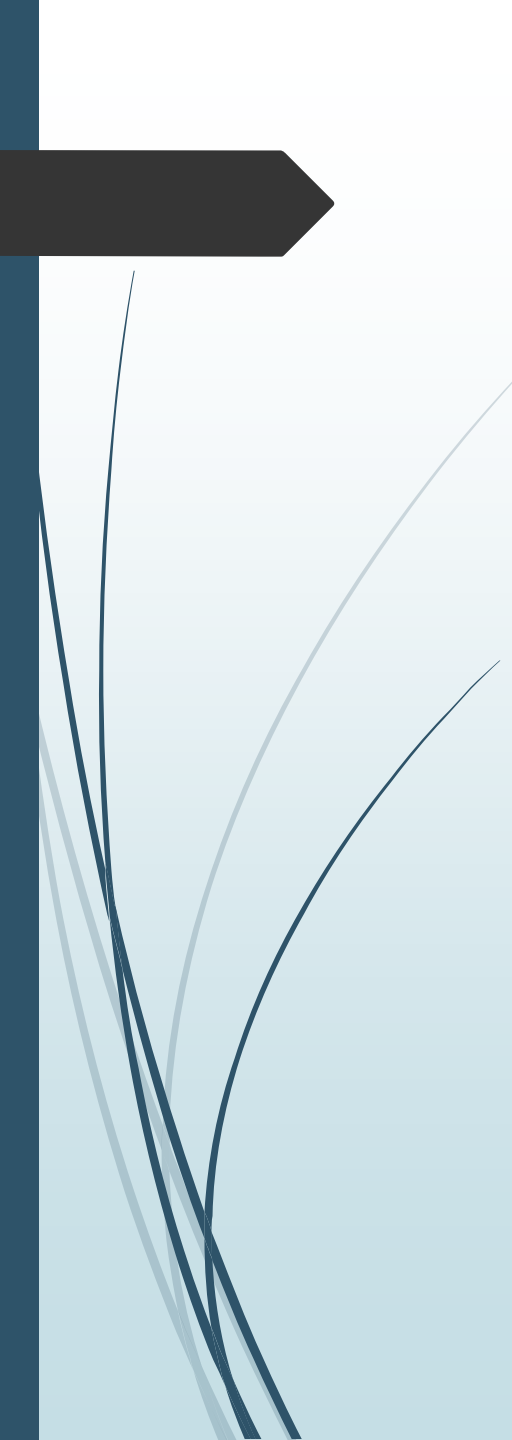



CHARACTERS

- **The elephant (grave digger)**
- **Jayan and Manu (reluctant poacher) – Poachers**
- **Leela, the prostitute who marries Jayan**
- **Synthetic Achan, the uncle of Jayan**
- **Vasu, the gnome-like forest officer**
- **the American documentary-makers- Teddy , Ravi and Emma**
- **Dr. Ravi Varma, the head veterinarian at The Wildlife Rescue and Rehabilitation Centre**
- **Madame Samina Hakim , the divisional range officer**

SUMMARY

- ▶ “The Tusk That Did the Damage” is a bighearted, morally complex novel about an assorted crew of South Indians, written by the promising young writer Tania James. In this new book, the author of “Aerogrammes and other Stories” and the novel “Atlas of the Unknowns” once again takes readers to her parents’ native Kerala. We meet farmers, poachers, bureaucrats, two callow American filmmakers, a wildlife veterinarian and a 10-foot bull elephant — trespassers all.
- ▶ The characters step into and on each other’s lives in a tropical setting lush with teal, flycatcher, rosewood, sandalwood, jacaranda, mangoes. Against the paradisaical backdrop, James dramatizes conflicts among environmentalists, family members and friends, between loggers and farmers, between Western filmmakers and their Indian subjects, between humans and wildlife.
- ▶ Like the novel’s documentarians, Emma and Teddy, James studied filmmaking in college. She projects similar fortune and privilege onto Emma and Teddy, who are both earnest and energetic, yet naively entitled. The friends are on the cusp of maturity, and this trip to India is likely to propel them into adulthood.
- ▶ Emma and Teddy travel to Kerala in the fall of 2000 to film the dedicated Ravi Varma, a veterinarian famous for reuniting baby elephants with their mothers. Emma is particularly starstruck by Ravi’s bearing and commitment. The Americans are confident that this remarkable environmentalist story will open professional doors and at the same time foster public commitment to wildlife protection.

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- Meanwhile, we meet a farming family with a very different attitude to elephants. The studious Manu and his edgy brother, Jayan, live with Jayan's wife, Leela, and their mother on a small rice farm. Jayan has spent four years in prison for poaching. They are all mourning the death of a young cousin killed while guarding the farm at night. The murderer is the infamous elephant Gravedigger. Grieving Uncle Achan demands retribution for the loss of his son. Sooryamangalam Sreeganeshan is a calf when we meet him, caught in the crossfire of a brutal mass elephant shooting. He watches his mother get shot in the mouth, and poachers take a saw to the bridge of an old tusker's trunk, tipping the ivory "from the root, easy as a fruit". Later, after a bad incident with an elephant handler, he turns rogue: terrified villagers call him the Gravedigger for the tender way in which he covers his victims' bodies with leaves. Despite all the human dramas, the most compelling story here is that of Gravedigger, orphaned when poachers shot his mother.
 - Two young Americans, Teddy and Emma, come to observe this human drama and to inject a little drama of their own. They are at the Kavanar Wildlife Park to make a documentary about a charismatic veterinarian who runs a rescue centre for elephants. As these human lives collide, James displays real flair for unmasking her characters, with all their foibles and benevolence, but it is the elephant who is the novel's unquestionable star.

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- ▶ Emmy and Teddy follow Ravi for several months, marveling at his knowledge and compassion, but eventually growing disillusioned by some of his compromises. Achan sends his nephews deep into the jungle to avenge their cousin's death. The brothers risk their lives with every step, while arguing about whether to poach the tusks after killing the animal. Madame Hakim pressures Leela to reveal the brothers' plans, which are more likely to kill them than the wily elephant.
 - ▶ Indeed, Gravedigger continues to steal the show with his ghostly appearances and dramatic flashbacks. He is "adopted" by one human after another and used variously as entertainment, transportation and laborer. His own story is braided with sagas about pachyderms past. James reveals that the first elephants were born with wings, and when they lost the gift of flight, their compensation was the appearance of lustrous tusks. She also spins an enchanting, tragic tale about a small boy who steals a tusk and overnight metamorphoses into an elephant. "This is because of that tusk, the boy said, his eyes watering. It was the tusk that did the damage."
 - ▶ Perhaps it's Ravi who best articulates the haunting powers of Gravedigger and his kin. "So the animal that primitive man most feared was the tusker with the broken tooth. These were the angriest, most irritated creatures, most prone to very violent episodes. So why do you think primitive man chose to worship Ganesh, an elephant with a broken tooth? Because fear and worship are two sides of the same coin."
 - ▶ James skillfully blends the suspense of a thriller and the erotic tensions of two romantic triangles with mythical, mournful flashbacks to Gravedigger's life and ancestry. All this is leavened by her witty portrayals of the zealous, cagey, overbearing park official, Madame Samina Hakim, and the uncle, called Synthetic Achan because he rails against Coca-Cola and other artificial foods. "The Tusk" nimbly divulges virtues and vulnerabilities so readers come to empathize with everyone, especially with Gravedigger, the very soul of the novel.

MYTHICAL STORY OF ELEPHANT

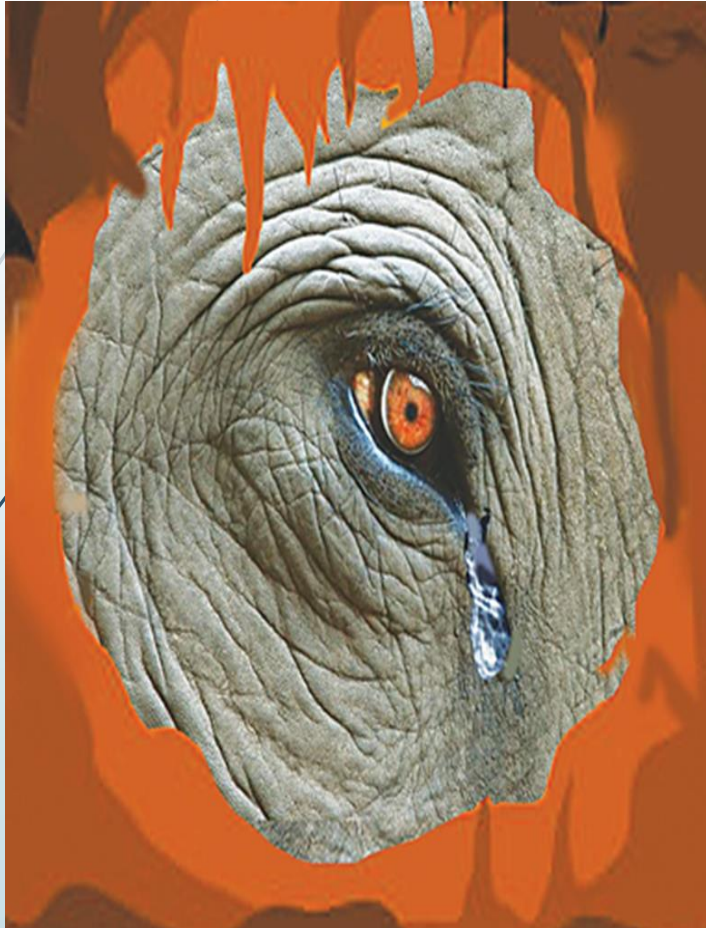


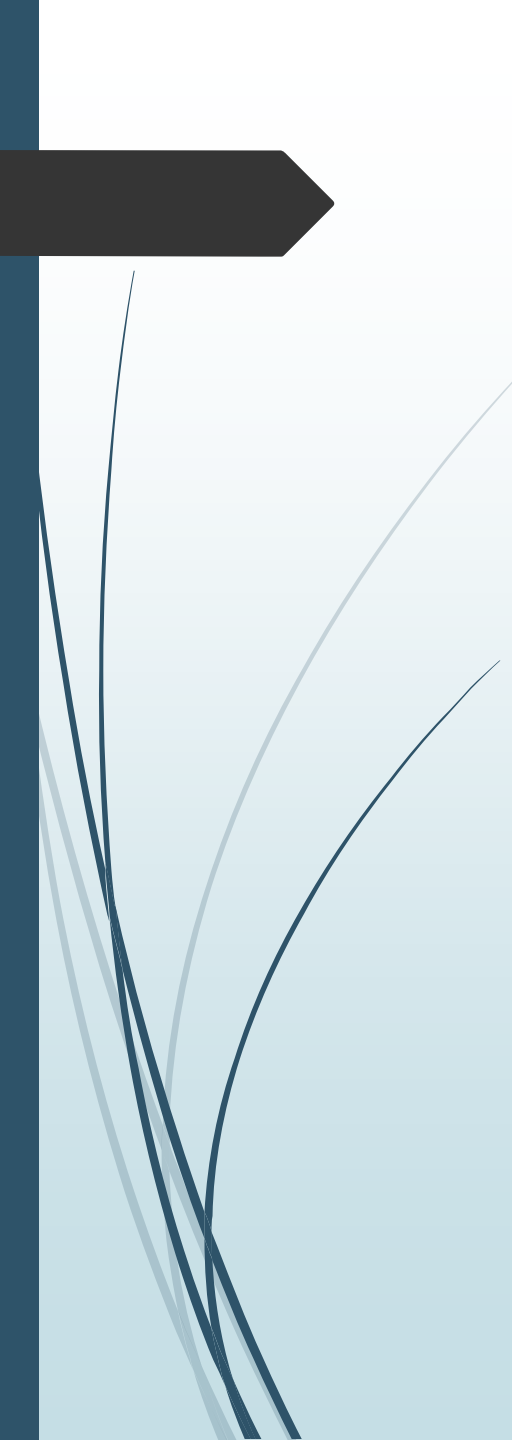
- ▶ once upon a time, so an old Indian story goes, every bull elephant had wings. They circled in the air like giant dragonflies until a kerfuffle with a grumpy sage cursed them to a life without flight. After much negotiation, the sage condescended to give them, in lieu of their wings, great, hulking tusks of ivory.

THREE NARRATORS- 3 POINTS OF VIEW

- ▶ first narrator is the main character, the elephant- Gravedigger because he kills people, then "buries" them neatly.
- ▶ Next Manu, the (reluctant) poacher, who joins his older brother, Janay. Manu begins his saga with the story of his cousin, Raghu.
- ▶ Emma, the filmmaker, a young American who's filming a documentary of Dr. Ravi Varma, the head veterinarian at The Wildlife Rescue and Rehabilitation Centre, with the help of her friend, Teddy, another filmmaker.
- ▶ The events take place in South India, and provides a startling picture of India and the perils of elephant poaching and the ivory trade.
- ▶ the psychology of minds other than our own, human and non-human.

The story moves between these three narratives, following their lives, looking back at the events that have shaped them until now, leading them towards each other and the inevitable confrontations that beckon. There is an authenticity to the narrative of the younger brother that has the effect of drawing the reader deep into the lives of his family and neighbours, that his story involves more than just himself. The insights into the perceptions from the elephants point of view are sensitively handled.



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- ▶ The Gravedigger has memories, emotions and dreams: he watched as his mother was killed by poachers, and his behaviour in years to come looks like deliberate revenge. He has killed or injured multiple humans; his nickname refers to his habit of 'burying' his victims under palm fronds. The poacher is nineteen-year-old Manu, who learned everything he knows about the forest from his older brother, Jayan. When the Gravedigger kills their cousin, Raghu, the brothers have to decide what they are willing to give up in their pursuit of ivory.
 - ▶ The last piece of the narrative puzzle is Emma, who is in Kerala with Teddy to shoot a documentary in a wildlife park. They film an elephant calf being rescued from a ditch and reunited with its mother, and also interview Samina Hakim, Divisional Range Officer for the Forest Department. In the process they stumble upon what looks like a conspiracy: the Forest Department has been authorizing Shankar Timber Company to fell trees, putting them in conflict with villagers who rely on the forest for their livelihood.

THEMES

- The conscious choice of the author to dig deep into the life and struggles of an Indian elephant and the human society that lives in the vicinity of its forests.
- The close to life portrayal of many present day challenges faced by people and the elephant.
- The effort to present not 1 but 3 perspectives panning gender and species to bring out a unique view that readers might enjoy – that of an elephant, a poacher and a film maker.
- For those wanting to know India and its love-hate relation with elephants without going through the daily grind of poaching, crop damage, funding problems etc. that fill the pages of local dailies, this book is a good initiation to those facets. It is also an eye-opener for those who wish to believe all is well with the elephant in India because the country gives them a god-like status.
- It is not often that a book of fiction is written based on the story of an elephant. It is even rarer when the author tries to see a situation as sensitive as human-animal conflict from the perspective of the human and also the animal and yet maintain a neutral ground.
- In ‘The Tusk That Did The Damage’ by Tania James, there’s another layer – a third perspective and each one of them tied neatly in a thread that touches conservation, poaching, habitat degradation, politics and the current tumultuous existence of India’s national heritage animal amidst people who worship it and wish it was dead in the same breath.
- Ivory, which comes from elephant tusks, is considered very valuable. Because of the high price of ivory, poachers illegally kill elephants so that they can take their tusks and sell them. Tens of thousands of elephants are killed each year for their tusks, and as a result, elephant populations have declined rapidly. What else might this government body be willing to turn a blind eye to?