

Symbolic Representation of Nature in the Tamil Film *Roja*

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Abstract

The paper throws light on hidden symbols of nature in the film 'Roja' directed by Manirathnam. This focuses on eco critical perspectives in the film Roja. The director's persuasion of human being's relation with nature can be understood through this film. The naturalistic exposure in every scene makes the audience to understand the concept in multiple dimensions. He is an exponent in giving voice to the voiceless elements. The film Roja stands as a symbolic representation of nature. This work proves the human centered concept in nature. The director's unique way of screen play is analyzed in the paper. This paper depends on how the scenes symbolically convey more messages rather than dialogues spoken by the characters. This also helps us to understand the importance of screenplay in a movie.

Key words: *Symbolism, Film Studies, Nationalism*

Introduction

This movie possesses more eco critical aspects with hidden meaning in it. Director Manirathnam is well known for expressing his aesthetic sense of arts through symbols and environment. The movie Roja brings more eco critical aspects from the beginning till the end. The title of the film is the name of the female protagonist and also a name of a flower. This flower also symbolizes love. So even through the title the director expresses how our feelings are interrelated with nature. This movie starts from a village Tirunelveli, Tamilnadu and ends in Kashmir.

The character Roja will be introduced through the song 'Chinna Chinna Asai'. In the beginning with flute music the director will show, how nature provides source for all being in the earth. Especially he shows it through the scenes like a man fishing from river for his deeds, aquatic birds hunting fishes for their survival, how rain gives them water to live and how a river helps the human beings to travel in it. In this song Roja expresses how she wants to be close with nature. So the director makes us to remember of childhood days with nature. From the beginning Roja is shown as an angel of nature. Certain lines in that song express bio friendly nature of human beings.

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(To play in the muddy fields, while planting a sapling
To catch fish and let it swim back in the river).

The first line tells about planting saplings for our future generation people, with happiness in heart. The next line recommends us to be bio friendly because she wants to catch the fish and let it swim back into the river not to do any harm to it. This also symbolizes that Roja is living close with nature.

Since Roja lives in the village in Tirunelveli, in the next violin music the director shows the full process of harvesting a field because rice is the important crop cultivated in that place. This helps any type of audience to know about paddy field. So he shows how rural people live their life with nature. In the next violin music a fisher man will be rowing coracle with the flow of water and sing his own song to echo in the valley. So nature comforts him by carrying him to his destiny and the rocks around him echoes his voice and makes him to hear his own song. This makes him to enjoy his trip. This could be compared with the reaper's beautiful song in the poem Solitary Reaper by William Wordsworth.

After this song there will be a scene where Roja uses a technique to spy the bride who comes to choose her sister as his wife. In that scene the little girl will be at the top of a rock and watching whether the bride's car coming or not. She informs Roja about the status and when his car crosses across them Roja sends the group of goats to block the car and they will be hiding behind the small rock and closely

observing his activities. So this scene shows that without any advance technologies we can spy a person using natural elements. So nature can help the human beings in any situation. So through this scene Roja identifies a bad habit of Rishi that is smoking. At the same time for Rhishi this is an opportunity to come out of the car and admired by the beauty of nature in that village.

In this movie, Roja is shown as women having more faith in god. She worships a god who is near the falls where she used to play with. She expresses her inner emotions only with that god. But when she worships, the director always shows that falls as background setting that symbolizes she indirectly worships the water comes from falls because water is the essential source for all beings in the world. Even 'Valluvar' has written in his couplet that

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(When water fails, functions of nature cease, you say

Thus when rain fails, no men can walk in 'duty's ordered way)

This couplet gives reason for the action done by Roja. This couplet means that no one in this world can survive without water, rain gives water to the world. So that Roja was shown as worshiping the core source of nature water fall. Water originate from falls and ends in sea. So through this scene the director has shown the importance of water. So this scene seems like Roja has generous mind that she worships water to give all sources to everyone living in this world. In the song 'Chinna Chinna Asai', the director has given more importance to water. Because he shows water all water sources in this song in different forms.

When they show old women chatting among themselves there will be sweet sounds of humming birds behind it. That sounds like answering to those old women. This also expresses a common quality between birds and grandmothers, that they spread the information as much people as they can. This scene stands as a symbol of depth of village people's relation with nature. Manirathnam has screened all major role women in this movie as more caring and more kind characters as nature.

After the hero select Roja as his life partner instead of her sister, he feels little confused and frustrated so in the next scene he comes out and watching nature to stabilize his mind. We might have familiar with this type of scene in many films, if a person comes out from his depression he/she will come out to some airy places with nature. This shows even human emotions can be balanced by his natural environment.

After her marriage when she depart from her village the little girl will present her just a small eatable nuts for her but that makes her more emotional. That little girl symbolizes a messenger of the nature from where she lived and it seems like nature presents her a gift. This shows how much nature loves us. After she goes to Chennai, in a scene she feels sad and she wants to express it to someone, since she finds no believable people there, she steps down in the stairs and sit near small plant grown inside the house and this seems like she express her feeling with that plants. So this again shows her credibility towards nature rather than human being. Throughout this film whenever the director shows Roja their will be some little green plants behind or besides her. Even she comes at Chennai, inside the house there will be small plants grown here and there. This shows even Rishi's family loves nature.

After she realizes the truth reason behind her marriage, she go alone and she will be shown that she will be in dilemma, their instead of showing Roja crying, the camera man show water drops falling from leaves. The time he shows is night and there will be darkness around her. In this scene the director shows the motherly nature of nature, because in this scene Roja will be sitting in a very narrow space area. But the camera man will show the leaves of different plants around her. That seems like a child inside a mother's womb. The flout sound behind this scene makes us to feel that she is more cared by that nature. In the next scene she will be standing near the door and the fresh breeze blows to her face from the plants around her and the time he expose as bright morning that symbolically expresses that she got cleared of her doubts. So Manirathnam shows all human being have emotional contact with nature. He also shows how nature heals our heavy heart and consoles us.

In the song 'PuthuVellaiMazhai' in the beginning Roja will be surprised by the Hero Rishi by showing beautiful snow mountains in Kashmir. The place stays calm and frozen because of snow. In this scene Roja will be excited by the beauty of that place. So, the director has shown that nature can amuse

human beings even without doing any action by staying calm. This scene is similar to the scene in the movie Narnia. There, Lucy will first enter into Narnia through the wardrobe. There she will be excited by the beauty of snow fall and that place surrounded by pure snow. In the song 'Puthu Vellai Mazhai' they will show a location, were full of white snow surrounded and people dancing around fire. Though it shows the love between the hero and heroine that indirectly shows pure snow is polluted by carbon from the fire. There will be a dried tree near the screen in it. That shows man destroys the purity of nature. Even the humming sound and the music which comes at the beginning of the song itself take us into the mood of the cool climate in that place. There will be some lines which show how much Roja loves her husband.

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 (If you would be the river; I will be the bank of it
 If you would be the little bird; I will be the sky)

These lines will be told by Roja to her husband. These lines explains love and care of nature and the character Roja. In the first line he compares her love with the nature of banks of the river. There is no shape for a river without banks so in this song the lyricist symbolizes that Roja is going to give shape to his life and guide him to choose his path. Because banks give path for the river to flow. Similarly that in the second line her love is compared with sky's love with a bird. So, wherever the bird goes the sky will be with it. Like that Roja acknowledges him that she will be with him always. Both flow of river and the bird's space to fly has no end. Like that she tells that her love and care with her husband is endless. In these lines the director also gives the clue about the forthcoming story. That is Roja is going to save Rishi from the terrorists.

When they show the way to place of terrorists living, they will display only stone walls and stony way. So this environment itself stands as the mindset of terrorist people that those people won't give space for emotions and feelings. So this also gives another eco critical thought that where there is green nature their lives human being with happy life. In another scene Roja will be standing in forth of a big single rock and talking with a character for help. That stone symbolizes a big she is heavyhearted because of her problem. Even when they show the place of terrorists, the director show only stones built as walls around their house. This symbolizes there is no mercy or love to play role in their life.

In Kadhal Rojave song at the first humming they will show a green forest then they will show tinny flowers finally they will show Roja roaming and playing in that forest. This place symbolizes the inner mind of the hero who suffers of separation of hero. This scene also remembers how the Satan explains about Eve in the Eden garden. In this song Roja was shown as a happy angel playing in nature and hero as very sorrowful man inside a room. Then in that song the lyrics shows extraordinary comparison of Roja with nature. The lines are

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(When breeze caresses me...

It reminds me of your saree caressing me.)

In these lines he indirectly expresses the soft nature of breeze through comparing it with soft silk saree. Breeze also stands as a symbol for remembering sweet memories of past. Throughout this song natural elements are compared with the relation between hero with heroine. This beautifies Roja by comparing her with nature. In the line

□□□□□□□□ □□□□ □□□□□□□□□□□ □□□□ □□□□ (Are my kisses with thorns...say it)

The lyricist ends the stanza with this line. Thorns are considered as cruel fragment in the soft and beautiful flower rose. but only stems have thorns in their surface. This line shows that he is kissing the thorns because he could not reach the flower. The pain of the hero because of isolation from Roja is expressed through this line.

Throughout this film water place an important role. Most of the symbols were portrayed through water for instance, after Roja makes decision to return from Chennai to Tirunelveli because of the hatred towards her husband, she will reveal her dislike and confusions with her Husband Rishi. When Roja talk with her husband the camera man will show roaring sea as background. Rishi will try to control her emotions by asking her to stop her blames towards him in polite manner but he fails in it so he shouts to stop her speech. At this juncture they will screen a calm lake near that sea that shows her mindset.

Because till that moment she will be expressing her outburst of emotions without gape like the roaring waves behind her but now her mind got stabilized mind to hear his speech. So here water is shown as the mindset of Roja. Even at the end when they rejoin together and hugging with each other there will be water falls from the dam behind them. So the brimming water from the dam symbolizes their overflow of rejoice. So from the beginning till the end director Manirathnam has given a separate role for water by showing it's different forms

So, from the beginning till the end, symbolic representations of nature give multiple meanings to this movie. Director Manirathanam has firm idea over his theme to show environment as main element in human being's life.

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