



“Anthropocentrism vs. Biocentrism in Vaikom Muhammad Basheer’s *Bhoomiyude Avakasikal*: An Ecocritical Study”

PRESENTED BY

NAME – AISWARYA . M and SREERANJINI

COURSE - M.A. ENGLISH

SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES JAIN(Deemed-to-be-University)

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Abstract

The Enlightenment’s scientific rationalization of nature and society prompted a response in the form of Romanticism, which emphasized the intrinsic value of nature and cultivated ecological consciousness. This research paper explores the interconnectedness of “society, nature, and literature” through the writings of “Vaikom Muhammad Basheer”, focusing on his notable work *Bhoomiyude Avakasikal*(translated as “The Rightful Inheritors of the Earth”). The narrative reflects the societal attitudes of the 1990s, examining the contrasting perceptions toward animals and the human-nature relationship. The story introduces three viewpoints: the “writer’s wife”, who perceives bats as harmful creatures; the “villagers”, who consider them to be their ancestors; and the “writer”, who asserts that all creatures, regardless of species, share equal ownership of the Earth.

One of the key themes in the short narrative is *Vasudhaiva kutumbakam*, a Sanskrit concept meaning "the world is one family," which emphasizes the unity between humans, animals, and nature. The work challenges anthropocentric worldviews, which place humans at the centre of existence, and instead promotes “biocentrism”, recognizing that animals and other non-human beings are as much a part of the natural world as humans. Through an “ecocritical lens”, Basheer questions the conventional belief that humans are the only rightful inheritors of the Earth and urges readers to adopt a more inclusive view of coexistence.

This paper highlights how Basheer’s narrative reflects “Romantic ideals” by delving into the complex relationship between society and nature. It also examines the thematic shift from “anthropocentrism to biocentrism”, proposing that animals, as rightful inhabitants of the world, may even be more deserving of Earth’s resources than humans. Ultimately, *Bhoomiyude Avakasikal* promotes a vision of harmony and respect between all living beings, encouraging a shift in perspective toward ecological awareness.

Introduction

Romanticism is the term for the scientific rationalisation of the natural world that was fostered by the Enlightenment period of the 18th century, which positioned humans at the pinnacle of creation and established them as the only guardians of nature. This anthropocentric mindset gave rise to it. Vaikom Muhammad Basheer's "Bhoomiyude Avakasikal", which challenges the widely held beliefs that humans are superior to the natural world, stands out as a significant critique of human exceptionalism in the light of this historical intellectual revolution. This short narrative explores the nuanced interaction between nature and humans, arguing against anthropocentric ideas and in favour of a biocentric viewpoint.

This research paper offers a critique of Anthropocentrism in favour of a more inclusive and ecologically conscious view of life by examining how Basheer's story illustrates the conflicts between human civilisation and the non-human world. Examining the story's depiction of human-animal relationships—especially the bat's symbolic function—is essential to understanding how the lines separating people from the rest of nature are always changing. Additionally, the presentation will address how the title, *The Rightful Inheritors of the Earth*, changes the narrative's emphasis from human dominance to a broader interpretation of earthly inheritance.

Methodology

This research analyses the short story "Bhoomiyude Avakasikal" (*The Rightful Inheritors of the Earth*) by "Vaikom Muhammad Basheer" using an ecocritical lens. The novel explicitly explores the issues of anthropocentrism, biocentrism, and the interaction between humans and nature. Additionally, the study seeks to demonstrate how Basheer's story challenges anthropocentric notions, fosters ecological consciousness, and embodies Romantic values.

A Synopsis of Ecocriticism

Examining the connection between literature and the environment, ecocriticism is a relatively new area of literary study. It aims to comprehend how ecological issues are reflected in, influenced by, and shaped by literature.

1. Anthropocentrism, a worldview that puts people at the centre of the universe and puts their demands and interests ahead of those of other species and the environment, is one of the key ideas of ecocriticism.
2. Biocentrism: An ideology that promotes equal rights and regard for all living things, including humans, and acknowledges their inherent worth.
3. Ecofeminism: A viewpoint that emphasises the connection between social and ecological concerns by connecting environmental exploitation and women's oppression.

Anthropocentrism and biocentrism are the primary topics of this essay.

1. Romanticism and Ecological Consciousness

Romanticism challenges the Enlightenment's logical and mechanical conception of the universe by highlighting the spiritual and artistic aspects of nature. Romantic authors frequently aimed to re-establish a human connection with nature by viewing it as a wellspring of morality, inspiration, and knowledge. environment is a mirror for human emotion, development, and self-awareness, and humans and environment have a respectful rather than dominating connection.

Basheer challenges the Enlightenment idea of humanity's primacy in the natural order in *Bhoomiyude Avakasikal*, embodying the Romantic spirit. Ecological consciousness permeates the plot, not just as a supporting topic but also as a major theme that subverts anthropocentric notions. Basheer criticises human society's propensity to view itself as apart from and superior to the natural environment by illustrating a struggle over who should possess the globe.

2. Anthropocentrism and Biocentrism in Basheer's Work:

Bhoomiyude Avakasikal presents a stark contrast between two opposing perspectives on human-nature relationships. The central conflict in *Bhoomiyude Avakasikal* arises from differing perspectives on the relationship between humans and animals, with a particular focus on the bats that the villagers view as their ancestors. This belief reflects an anthropocentric view of the world, where humans see themselves as the pinnacle of existence, with all other creatures serving secondary roles. Whereas on the other hand, the writer's wife embodies the anthropocentric view, perceiving the bats as pests that threaten human comfort and health. She advocates for their extermination, highlighting the human-centered approach that often dominates societal attitudes towards nature.

The writer himself offers a nuanced perspective that transcends both anthropocentrism and biocentrism asserting that all creatures—humans, animals, and plants alike—are rightful inheritors of the earth, but still highlight biocentric perspective in the story where we can see Basheer's protagonist challenges the anthropocentric narrative by arguing that animals, rather than humans, have a more legitimate claim to the earth. Even when he mentions the inconvenience caused by the bats, he also emphasizes their right to exist and their role in the natural world.. This view aligns with biocentrism, which holds that all living beings possess intrinsic value and that human interests should not be privileged above those of other species.

3. Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam: A Universal Ecology:

Bhoomiyude Avakasikal is a moving examination of the relationship between humans and environment that has its roots in *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam's* ancient Indian philosophy, "The World is One Family." This idea, which has its roots in ancient Indian philosophy, goes beyond the human-centric perspective of the planet by implying that all living things—regardless of species—are related to one another and belong to the same cosmic family. He understands the delicate balance of the ecosystem and the interdependence of all living things. He stresses the bats' right to exist and their place in nature, even as he acknowledges the difficulty they create. Romantic ideas of ecological harmony and connectivity are consistent with this conception of universal ecology, which views nature as an extended family. This viewpoint promotes a more peaceful cohabitation with other creatures and rejects the anthropocentric idea of human primacy.

4. Ecocriticism and Literary Reflection:

Bhoomiyude Avakasikal's themes can be better understood via the lens of ecocriticism, an interdisciplinary subject that studies the link between literature and the natural world. The story's examination of the struggle between humans and animals and its discussion of ecological justice issues offer a wealth of opportunities for ecocritical examination. Basheer critiques human conceit and ignorance towards the environment through the writer's character and his developing comprehension of nature.

The literary framework of the novel likewise mirrors the environmental issues it tackles. With the bat standing in for the more general problem of human-nature connections, the story is full with symbolism.

The tale transitions from a perspective of nature as something to be feared or controlled to one that has to be understood and appreciated as a component of a wider, linked universe, marking a thematic and structural movement from anthropocentrism to biocentrism.

5. The Title and the Shift in Perspective

An important break from conventional anthropocentric tales is the title, *The Rightful Inheritors of the Earth*. It suggests that all living creatures share the earth's legacy rather than humans being the only ones. The title places the narrative in a biocentric context by questioning the idea of human exceptionalism.

The story examines the notion that people are a part of a wider ecological community rather than being superior to other animals. Although they are sometimes viewed as pests, bats are depicted as legitimate earthly creatures who should be respected and treated with kindness. This change in viewpoint emphasises the necessity of a more sympathetic and inclusive view of nature.

Conclusion

In *Bhoomiyude Avakasikal*, “Vaikom Muhammad Basheer” presents a compelling narrative that critiques the anthropocentric worldview, advocating instead for a biocentric perspective that recognizes the equal value of all life forms. By examining the complex relationship between humans and nature, the story invites readers to question their own assumptions and embrace a more eco-conscious worldview. Through the lens of Romanticism, Ecocriticism, and *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*, the story challenges the idea that humans are the rightful inheritors of the earth and promotes a vision of a more inclusive, ecological society. As such, Basheer’s work remains a vital contribution to ongoing discussions about the human-nature relationship, offering a vision of the world as a shared, interconnected space where all beings are entitled to respect and coexistence.

This study adds to the expanding corpus of research on Basheer's ecological philosophy and its applicability to current discussions on environmental ethics, the relationship between humans and nature, and the need for a more just and sustainable society.

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