

**Globalization and Industrialization: A Menace to Nature and
Woman in Usha K.R's *Monkey-Man***

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Abstract

The novel *Monkey-Man* symbolizes the transformation of a peaceful, hustle-less city which was considered as a 'Pensioner's Paradise' into a modernized, IT-hub now aspirationally called as 'Silicon Valley'. The novelist, Usha, K.R. plots this story in her own native place, Bangalore – the city whose features have been severely tainted in the past two decades. She portrays the transformation of this city from being a blustery town of gardens, a pensioner's ecstasy and a resident's paradise into one of the most prominent information technology hubs of India. Presently, it's an extremely materialistic city, one of the leading metropolis of India with blooming property prices, fanatical traffic and a maddening rush.

Keywords: Globalization, Industrialization, Materialistic

Introduction

The most recent work which has discussed the ill effects of modernization and industrialization on nature and women is *Monkey Man* (2010) by Usha K.R. She has been writing fiction for more than two decades, starting with short fiction and has bagged the prestigious 'Katha Award' for her short story 'Sepia Tones' in 1995. Her debut novel *Sojourn* was published in 1998 and the second one, *The Chosen*, came in 2003. *A Girl and a River* her third and well acknowledged work for which she won the Vodafone Crossword Award 2007 also

got her shortlisted for the Commonwealth Writers' Prize. *Monkey-man* her most recent work got her the nomination for the DSC Prize for South Asian Literature in 2012. Usha K.R belongs to Bangalore. She argues that globalism and privatization accompanied by information technology revolution have altered the way people think. Bangalore is the poster city for these changes all over India. She is sublime at telling the narrative of communist ideologues of yesteryears who were raised to trust themselves as the "intellectual thinking treasures" of society and spent numerous espresso mornings enthusiastically talking about and guarding a belief system they had no clue how to execute. She has discovered her space amongst writers today, particularly with a topic that investigates how diverse people cope-up with their changing surroundings.

The novel *Monkey-Man* symbolizes the transformation of a peaceful, hustle-less city which was considered as a 'Pensioner's Paradise' (K.R, *Monkey Man* 13) into a modernized, IT-hub now aspirationally called as 'Silicon Valley' (K.R, *MM* 13). The novelist, Usha, K.R. plots this story in her own native place, Bangalore – the city whose features have been severely tainted in the past two decades. She portrays the transformation of this city from being a blustery town of gardens, a pensioner's ecstasy and a resident's paradise into one of the most prominent information technology hubs of India. Presently, it's an extremely materialistic city, one of the leading metropolis of India with blooming property prices, fanatical traffic and a maddening rush. *Monkey-Man* interlaces a complicated pastiche of lives led over numerous decades. There are political influences to float between a blend of a bizarre secret, a story of old generalizations and newly discovered prospects, and present day India's work-driven society. It unfolds the story of diverse families as they experience their lives in Bangalore. Their experience, adolescence kinships and political preferences are depicted in profuse detail. The male protagonist, Shrinivas Moorthy, lives in Ammanagudi Street which he has seen being distorted since his childhood from a natural place, "a nice mix of cows and men" (K.R, *MM* 13) to a area where, "the noise, the traffic, even the sludge of brown mud that flowed in from the excavations on the main road, silting its monsoon drains" (13). This industrialization and globalization of their dwelling place has bothered his mother in a profound way. It is not easy for her to adapt to these modern ways of living. For example, in his childhood the street had many houses that followed the business of

cow rearing and the locals including them used to buy milk from these households. But currently all those have been transformed into one or the other IT-related firms and offices. The mother has disliking for the packaged milk either in bottles or plastic bags available these days. The following lines from the novel depict this uneasiness:

Ammanagudi Street had always smelt of cow dung, for a little beyond their houses, just before the road narrowed, there were many Golla households with their cows penned in rows in their compounds. As a boy he had gone there each morning with pail to fetch the milk, fresh and forthy, for his mother had had a horror of milk that came in bottles and later, plastic packets (K.R, *MM* 13-14)

Not only the eating habits get affected but also the homes they live in have been transformed from open and garden bearing bungalows to matchstick type multistoried flats. His mother prefers to live with his sister in Mysore on the pretext of taking care of her children but the actual reason is her preference for residences in natural environment rather than these concrete based jungles as quoted, “His mother had lived with him in the flat for a few years, bewildered, ill-at- ease in the confined space, before moving to Mysore to live with his sister in a house with a garden; she said her daughter needed help with her three small children” (K.R, *MM* 15).

His mother has such an intimate connection with nature that they form a part of her routine as well as festive life. “Sometimes she wore a crown of turmeric and vermilion powder, and sometimes a mask of white butter with a golden crown. And when she was not ready to face the world she hid behind a screen of marigolds” (K.R, *MM* 16).

The call centre culture, a result of globalization and introduced as succor for the needs of the Western masters, has further deteriorated the relationship with nature as demonstrated by Pushpa Rani, a female employee who works in the midnight shift and most of her mornings go waste as she sleeps during that period. When her shift gets changed she experiences the beauty of sun-rise as quoted below:

The first SMS of the day is from our regular listener Pushpa Rani- Hi P. Rani, my Prani- who says, Bali Today I learnt what good morning really means. . . I saw the

sun today in the morning after a whole month! No, she doesn't stay in the Arctic but in our very own Bangalore. It just happens that she was on the eight-to-four night shift till yesterday. Believe me, she says, it's the most glorious sight in the world to see the sun rise. (K.R, *MM* 28).

The modern job has provided financial stability but has alienated her from nature. Her mother was a professional garland maker. Their previous means of livelihood kept them much closer and associated with nature as depicted in the novel:

The four of them, her brother included, would sit amidst the sweet-smelling jasmine in summer or the milder sevanti or even the odourless kanakambra to string the flowers. She felt a special kinship with the small hours of the morning, mingled as they were with the scent of jasmine. . (K.R, *MM* 76-77).

But being a woman who instinctually gets connected with nature, Pushpa Rani even discovers an association with natural surroundings in her modern glass enclosed night shift job. She glares at the night sky through the long glass windows of her office and admires the beauty of the rays of sunlight.

Hence, the original essence of the novel is "How the globalised multinational company culture tainted Bangalore?" (88) Usha K.R. is keen on reviving the spirit of old Bangalore and depicts the changes in the lives of humans belonging to diverse sections of the society. But the counter-effects of this MNC culture are more pervasive and pestering for women and nature. Whether it is the old lady i.e. Moorthy's mother, the garland maker's daughter, Pushpa Rani turning into a call centre girl or Bangalore city streets embraced with natural beauty, all are major victims of this drastic commercial growth. Therefore, the impact of modernization and globalization is devastating for the entire human race but more specifically for nature and woman. The monkey-man emerges out as a metaphysical symbol that connotes the psychological issues generated in common population due to devastating effects of industrialization against nature, customs and the underprivileged which mainly includes the woman in the patriarchal Indian society.

Volume IV
Issue X
October

IJELLH
International Journal of English
Language, Literature and Humanities

ISSN INTERNATIONAL
STANDARD
SERIAL
NUMBER
2321-7065
INTERNATIONAL CENTRE

Indexed, Peer Reviewed & Refereed Journal

IMPACT FACTOR- 4.287

Works Cited

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