

UGC SPONSORED MINOR RESEARCH PROJECT ON

“A Study on the contributions of D R Nagaraj towards Indian Cultural Criticism”

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Introduction

D R Nagaraj is fondly remembered as 'D R' or 'D R N' in the Kannada literary world. Primarily a literary critic D R wrote essays and criticism on a wide range of subjects: literature, cinema, politics, cultural and social history and was also a translator. D R Nagaraj was part of the 'Boosa agitation' which later led to the formation of DSS and the Dalit Movement in Karnataka. His important works which challenge mainstream cultural theories are in Kannada, waiting to be translated. English speaking academia noticed him when he published his first book in English *The Flaming Feet* in which he attempted to 'reconcile Ambedkar with Gandhi'.

D R Nagaraj was a very popular intellectual not just inside the Kannada world but also outside it. He has been eulogized by writers and thinkers as an intellectual hero of the backward classes in India. His lectures and talks have surprised and stunned people. The other reason, one which is relevant to the proposed study, is his multiple intellectual roles as a literary critic, historian of Dalit movements in India, a critic of cultural politics and identity politics and an institution builder. He considered these roles as different characters of the same play. His knowledge of literary criticism led him to interpret politics and culture in radically different ways. For instance, his understanding of Kannada literary tradition allowed him to comment on the changing nature of public sphere in Karnataka.

His contribution to various fields of study ranging from literary criticism to political criticism has been acknowledged widely. His ability to create metaphors and explain the past and the present through those metaphors has also been observed by a number of critics. Fifteen years after his death there has been a renewed interest in his writings in the English speaking community of India.

The spaces that he inhabited were very contrasting in nature. He taught and worked in remote areas of Karnataka with the same ease as he taught courses in CSDS and American Universities. Even though he operated within the university space he could still connect with the grass-root movements. Apart from his interest in literature and politics he had great interest in creating and building institutions. He looked forward to build institutions in such a way that it could work as a

catalyst in social transformation. He wanted universities to perform a significant role in producing thinkers and writers who would be in direct contact with social reality. He considered such work also as intellectual work.

D R Nagaraj's contribution to the field of Cultural Studies is immense. He was able provide a completely fresh perspective to the field by bringing in elements from literature, history and philosophy and changing the way Cultural Studies is practiced in academia. He not only influenced the scholarly world through his writings but also contributed to the social world by influencing activists and leaders. Hence, a study of his writings also entails a study of Indian cultural criticism and the interpretation of modern Indian history. The interdisciplinary nature of his writings compel us analyse contemporary events from an interdisciplinary perspective. Hence this study has also adopted an interdisciplinary perspective in analysing his contribution to Indian cultural criticism.

This study examines the essays published in the two books written in the English language. D R Nagaraj's writings in Kannada are vast and it requires an entirely new study to analyse and interpret his Kannada writings. This study restricts itself to the two books published in the English language and makes references to Kannada writings wherever necessary. The first book is "The Flaming Feet and Other Essays: The Dalit Movement in India" edited by Prithvi Datta Chandra Shobhi and first published in 1993 and republished in 2010. This book is a collection of originally written articles in English and a few translations. This book is a landmark in the history of Indian historiography. The second book is "Listening to the Loom: Essays on Literature, Politics, and Violence" edited by Pritvi Datta Chandra Shobhi and published posthumously in the year 2012. This book is again a landmark in the history of Indian cultural criticism.

Research Methodology

An interdisciplinary approach was set up to study D R Nagaraj's writings by combining history, literary theory and economics. The method primarily involved interpretation of texts.

Objectives:

A great deal of critique of globalization has conventionally come from the intellectual left. Thinkers from the intellectual left point out the problems that globalization has given rise to but have failed to understand the complexities of globalization. As opposed to such conventional criticism D. R. Nagaraj offers a whole new perspective on globalization which is grounded in native imagination of the world and an understanding of the world economic and intellectual order. Hence his writings on globalization have to be looked carefully. It has to be first placed in the history of native and post-colonial critique of globalization and then in the history of critique offered by the global left. A trajectory of a global critique of globalization has to be mapped and D. R. Nagaraj's critique of globalization should be located in that trajectory. As we enter a new phase of technology and economy driven globalization which is transforming our daily lives and also displacing large communities of people we need a comprehensive critique of globalization which comes from those who are directly affected by it. Studying D. R. Nagaraj's writings, we believe, can offer great possibilities to attempt such a critique.

Review of Literature: A preliminary reading of the works of D R Nagaraj was done and the important themes in his writings were identified. His English works were studied extensively. The context in which D R Nagaraj wrote was studied extensively. The cultural, social and political climate of D R Nagaraj's writings was also studied. Additional readings were done on themes of culture, literary theory, globalization and social movements.

Methodology: The study was primarily interpretative in nature. The study first set out to understand the basic concepts involved and then later began to investigate specific themes. An attempt was made to narrow down on two or three themes and then begin a focused study of those themes. The key insights offered by the writer were identified and those insights were expounded in seminar paper presentations. The feedback on the presentations was then used to further investigate the themes. Finally a report was prepared which included the feedback.

Organization of Chapters

The study reports consists of the following chapters schemes:

Chapters-I- Introduction

Chapters-II-: Narrating Metaphors: The Method of D R Nagaraj

Chapters-III- Globalization and Cultural Memory: Critical Discourses in D R Nagaraj's Writings

Chapters-IV- Thought and Action: A Reflection

Chapters-V- Conclusion

Outcome of the study: The following were the outcomes of the study

It can be strongly argued that D R Nagaraj was able to give a whole new direction to Indian cultural criticism. The metaphoric way of reading historical events can be considered a significant achievement in the field. His understanding of the way in which globalization affects cultural memory and the formation of identities will always provide deep insights into the complexities of the contemporary world. His writings have discredited the old notion of understanding 'culture' as a monolithic entity and have encouraged a view of culture that takes into account 'cross pollination' between different traditions and cultures which give rise to a particular culture. D R Nagaraj shows how 'Essentialism' while helping in immediate political gains for the marginalized and the oppressed can never become a mode of identity formation because of its inherent tendency towards violence.

Conclusion

D R Nagaraj's contribution to Indian cultural criticism shall always be remembered as his methods become more and more relevant for us to understand the contemporary world. His other works in Kannada needs to be translated in order to enrich the field of Indian cultural criticism further and to enable readers in English to gain better insights into D R Nagaraj's thinking. Cultural criticism in Indian needs to engage with ideas, themes and literary theories in Indian languages rather just confining itself to Western concepts. To conclude, it can be argued that

cultural criticism in India would have suffered if it weren't for D R Nagaraj's intervention in the field.