

Clutches Of Globalization – “A Study Of Seamen Kathalu

Dr. Y. Subhashini¹, Ms. K. Aswini²

¹Assistant Professor, Dept. of Telugu Studies, Sri Padmavati Mahila Visvavidyalayam, Tirupati – 2
ysubha@spmvv.ac.in

²Lecturer in Physics, Sri Padmavati Mahila Visvavidyalayam, Tirupati – 2
aswini.knani@gmail.com

Introduction

1. Globalization refers to the interconnectedness and integration of economies, cultures, and societies across the world. It has reduced barriers to international trade and allowed companies to operate more freely across nations, leading to an increase in global trade and investments. While it has fostered business relationships between countries, it has also weakened internal social structures. In the race for global competition, people are not only compelled to participate but are driven by a restless desire to succeed. The pursuit of wealth and a luxurious lifestyle has become a defining trait of contemporary society. However, this has come at a cost of Industrialization, urbanization, and excessive consumption have severely impacted the environment.

Responding to these consequences, writer Addepalli Prabhu published a short story collection titled “Seamen Kathalu”. This paper aims to explore the impact of globalization as reflected in these stories. Prabhu vividly portrays the dialect, attire, and lifestyle of the people from the Godavari region. He brings to life the rhythm of existence closely intertwined with the flow of the Godavari River. Through his stories, he beautifully illustrates how the people living along in banks coexist harmoniously with the river, the animals, and birds that depend on it. They treat them with the same love and care as they would for fellow human beings. However, in today's fast-paced world driven by rapid civilization, not only the traditional livelihoods of these people but also their agricultural lands, native species of birds and animals are facing extinction. The destructive force behind this transformation-globalization-forms the thematic core of many of his stories.

2. Destruction of Forests - The Cost of a Luxurious Lifestyle: Desiring a luxurious lifestyle is not inherently wrong. However, seeking comfort by destroying the pure environment and biodiversity around us is unquestionably harmful. The terms globalization and development echo constantly in our ears. The development does not belong to a privileged few; it is something that must benefit the entire society and, thereby, the entire nation. Real development involves strengthening the nation's wealth-not depleting it. In Seamen Kathalu, Addepalli Prabhu unveils the environmental wealth and simple lives that today's society is gradually losing. One such story from the collection that reflects the shadows of globalization on nature-centric lives is "Nagula Konda" (The Snake Hill).

Nagula Konda is a hill near the village of Chagalanadu. The villagers believe that there is hidden treasure beneath the hill, guarded by two two-headed snakes. Two outsiders, Gopinath and Visweshwara Rao, arrive with plans to purchase land around the hill. A local intermediary, Subbarao, helps them. Through Narayanamurthy, another local, they cleverly acquire the land. Narayanamurthy clears his debts with the money, buys a motorbike, and begins enjoying a comfortable life

Meanwhile, Gopinath and Visweshwara Rao bring in machinery and begin digging the hill. The villagers oppose this, believing that the snakes will bring misfortune if disturbed. But the outsiders dismiss this as blind superstition. Ultimately, the hill is destroyed.

While the contractors mock the villagers' beliefs, branding them as superstitious, such traditional views often serve to protect environmental wealth. The villagers protested, saying that the trees, birds and snakes would be destroyed. Yet Gopinath declared: "Money... If we have money, there will be development, who cares about hills, rivers, oceans... even the mines underground must be dug up and exploited. If we sit around thinking about trees, birds, or snakes, there'll be no development. We'll remain poor like you. Get rid of that mindset. Think about money – you'll prosper". (Pg. 58)

These words directly point to the mindset that leads to the destruction of Nature. Narayanamurthy, too, sells his land to pay off debts and lives comfortably. Prabhu masterfully presents a society where individuals focus solely on monetary gain, disregarding the consequences of environmental damage. He highlights how agriculture is viewed as unimportant, and Nature is treated as dispensable.

Another story in the same collection that brings attention to environmental degradation and the responsibilities of the present generation toward the future is "Lokam Mandi Kandu" (The World Is Not

Ours Alone) The protagonist, Ramanji, has lost the land that had been in his family for generations. He now makes a living selling firewood. The government, in the name of development, built a reservoir between village hills, taking away his land.

Through Ramanji, the story reflects on the glory of the villager's past and the sorrowful state of the present, stirring the readers to consider the future generations. Human beings, driven by selfishness, exploit all available resources within their own lifetimes without any concern for those who follow them later. Yet, Addepalli Prabhu, through Ramanji's voice, says: "Even before I turned fifty, the world seemed no longer ours. So even before the children are born... their world itself is disappearing?" (Pg. 65-66). These poignant words reflect the remaining sparks of humanity and care for future generations.

Reservoirs and large projects aim to control water and provide irrigation. However, if we increase afforestation and preserve the environment, the need for such projects can be reduced. Through such means, forests, hills, and farmland can flourish naturally.

3. Water Pollution - The Price of Civilization: A desire for comfort, luxury, and extravagance often leads humanity to destroy the purity and vitality of Nature. One story in Seamen Kathalu that stands as a clear example of this truth is "Seethakka Konda".

In the village of Ramagiri, a woman named Seetha would daily take her goats up the hill. There, under an Indian gooseberry (amla) tree, she began seeing an old, frail man. She would offer him food every day. Eventually, the old man passed away, and in that very spot, an anthill began to form, eventually developing into a sacred shrine. Over time, the natural beauty of the hill was compromised in the name of development.

In the early days, the hill would glow radiantly with the serene light of the full moon. But as crowds thronged, shops sprang up and artificial lighting replaced natural moonlight. Moreover, once pure hilltop spring-between the rocks - was a source of drinking water for the villagers but now, due to tourists dumping plastic bottles, wrappers, and waste, that water has turned into a polluted drain. "This hill doesn't have a proper road yet, so not many people come. But if steps are built up to this point, even more visitors will arrive (Pg. 73), "And still, they're planning more development, digging borewells too. Then people from far and wide all over will flood in, even cars will reach the top of the hill", Seetha tells four visitors from Rajahmundry (Pg. 74). Through this conversation, the author Addepalli Prabhu delivers a powerful message that unthinking demands for civilization and development only lead to increased waste and environmental degradation. "Don't wish for more people to come to this hill. The things you treasure might no longer belong to you," Seetha warns—suggesting that over exposure and human interference would strip the hill of its natural beauty. As Prabhu illustrates, the craving for civilization and development has led to the degradation of nature. He cautions us that unchecked urban expansion comes with a heavy ecological cost. "Globalization is not a monolithic force but an evolving set of consequences - some good, some bad, and some unintended. It is the new reality." (www.brainyquote.com) This statement accurately reflects the unfolding events in the story "Seamen-A Battle Against Industrial Pollution.

As globalization and growing consumer demands expand, the number of factories in the country increases, too. The waste discharged from these factories is devastating ecosystems. This theme is explored in the story "Seamen."

The protagonist, Seamen, is a skilled fisherman known for navigating his boat, casting nets, and catching fish. One day, while sitting on the sandy shore with friends, he sees dead turtles being washed up by the waves. Discovering that factory waste is the reason for their deaths, he rallies the villagers in protest. In the resulting police attack, he sacrifices his life.

Earlier in the story, Seamen watches as a turtle crawl out of the sea, digs a hole, lays its eggs, and returns to the ocean. When foxes approach to dig up the eggs, Seamen places a heavy stone slab and wooden sticks to protect the nest. This scene highlights the moral responsibility humans bear toward all life forms. As a child, Seamen once took turtle eggs home to eat with his friends. His parents scolded him: "That turtle may have come from who-knows-where, laid eggs here and left. If you eat those eggs, how will turtles survive in the future?" (Pg. 85) These lines reflect the value of ethical parenting and its long-term impact. Seeing dead turtles due to factory pollution, Seamen grieves: "Why should any living creature die before its time?" His sorrow leads to a fierce resistance that ultimately costs him his life. Through this, Prabhu conveys that every living being has a right to life and that awareness must shape our societal values. "Globalization is a great thing, but it needs a legal framework in which to blossom" (www.brainyquote.com). This story powerfully emphasizes the need for such frameworks. "Chinnanna... Manaveti Sailema?"- Resistance to Corporate Exploitation

Every natural resource of a country is part of its national wealth. But when governments grant unchecked freedom and rights over these resources to corporations, and those companies exploit the people, it leads to a sense of powerlessness among the citizens. This is the focus of the story "Chinnanna... Manaveti Sailema?"

A company arrives with plans to drill into the ocean floor to extract petroleum and other minerals. They prevent coastal villagers from fishing and compensate them with money. The government supports the company, even allowing them to kill locals without consequences. The villagers feel helpless. While storms have never harmed them, they now suffer due to this "corporate storm". The company buys up local lakes and dries them up. "I don't care about the money. But who ordered them to drain the lake that gives water to ten villages? For what price? What justification?" asks Vishnumurthy (Pg. 98), with an awakened conscience. In contrast, Kanakaravu replies, "Three died last year. Three more just recently. If we resist, ten more will die. Why invites trouble?" His words expose the brutal power of the corporation.

For a higher payout, 30 acres of forest are felled overnight. No one questions why. The company's language, land, and loyalties are not local Yet local officials, police, MLAs, and bureaucrats all obey the company's commands. "Many storms came and went. Not a feather on us was harmed. But this company storm? It stripped as bare" says Kanakaravu (p. 100). The message is clear: the disasters brought on by greedy development can be far worse than any natural calamity. When Vishnumurthy asks, "Chinnanna what is our strategy? Kanakaravu replies "Only one path-fall at the feet of every god, praying that under our land, beneath our beautiful sea, there is no oil... no gas... no resources. Only then will the land remain ours" (p. 101). These lines express the villagers love for their land and their yearning to pass on a pure environment to future generations. Karl Marx once said: "No society can rightfully claim ownership of the Earth. They are merely its users, enjoying its benefits. Their true duty is to leave it in a better state for the generations to come". This responsibility, Prabhu emphasizes, is one that every citizen must recognize.

4. Destruction of Soil - A Cautionary Tale of Agricultural Decline: The overuse of non-traditional commercial farming methods depletes the quality of the soil. Excessive use of fertilizers and chemicals renders the earth toxic. Though this is a commonly known fact, the unchecked greed of man continues to exploit the land - a theme powerfully explored in the story "The Duck That Laid Golden Eggs". In this story, a man owns a duck that lays a golden egg each day. Overjoyed, he begins living comfortably. But one day, another man approaches him and says, "One egg a day is not enough to get rich. If you want to prosper, allow me to conduct some experiments on your duck". With these experiments, the duck begins laying ten eggs a day,

Encouraged, the man takes a loan from the World Bank and establishes a duck farm. However, in due time, the eggs are no longer golden, the ducks begin dying, and the man is left with nothing but debt.

Through this fable-like story, Addepalli Prabhu effectively portrays how greed, when unchecked, can lead to environmental degradation and personal ruin. Just like organic farming once yielded rich, healthy crops while preserving soil fertility, sustainable practices ensure that the land remains useful for future generations. The comparison between crop yield and golden eggs is both apt and poetic. The story serves as a metaphor for how blindly following globalization's promises can cause individuals to lose their roots - and ultimately, their identity.

The Decline of Traditional Farming - "Sri Surya Narayana!" and "Bhoomedaki" Mahatma Gandhi once said, "The soul of India lives in its villages". Agriculture is not just the pride of rural India but the very foundation of its economy. Yet today, agriculture is receiving less attention - a concern highlighted in Addepalli Prabhu's stories "Sri Surya Narayana!" and "Bhoomedaki"

In "Sri Surya Narayana!", the central character, Boorayya, has three sons. The eldest works in the United States, the second failed in his studies and turned to farming, and the third, though educated, is idle due to unemployment. Boorayya once owned 50 acres and was a prosperous farmer. Now, despite their best efforts, his sons cannot make farming profitable. Mounting losses and debt ultimately discourage them from continuing the tradition.

In "Bhoomedaki", Narayana, a farmer, gives his land to his sons. One son, after failing to complete his education, takes up farming. The other sells his share to build fish ponds. Their children, having studied engineering, refuse to take up agriculture. Disheartened, Narayana dies with the realization that future generations will no longer engage in farming. But there is a spark of hope. Prashanth, Narayana's grandson - an aspiring engineer who plans to settle in America - declares: "I would rather be a farmer, growing food for people, than anything else". The question remains: Can Prashanth sustain himself as a pure, honest farmer? Will he succeed?

Prabhu implies that for youth like Prashanth to thrive in agriculture, the government must introduce meaningful reforms. The complete elimination of chemical fertilizers, and a shift toward organic farming, is vital. In today's age, an engineering graduate choosing to farm and protect people from toxic food is a truly hopeful sign. Governments must support such individuals with necessary policies and assistance. Otherwise, future generations may face a serious shortage of safe, healthy food.

Globalization's Grip on Agriculture: The influence of globalization is evident in both the stories. Governments purchase crops from farmers at low prices, only to sell or export them higher rates. Simultaneously, they invite multinational fertilizer corporations into the country, helping them earn enormous profits. These are all mechanisms of globalization - and they are slowly pushing traditional farmers out of their own lands and livelihoods.

In the end, soil degradation is not just an environmental issue - it is a social, cultural, and economic crisis. The health of the land directly affects the survival of future generations. By highlighting the plight of farmers, Addepalli Prabhu urges us to rethink what progress truly means.

5. Loss of Biodiversity - Development at the Cost of Nature: The short story "Haddu" ("The Limit") by Addepalli Prabhu highlights the government's attitude of showing no hesitation in destroying nature and driving various species of birds to extinction in the name of development projects. The story "Ooru Godaari" ("The Village Godavari") reflects how the construction of such projects has disrupted the lives of people, animals, and birds living in the Godavari river basin. It also portrays the eagerness of governments to push forward with such destructive development plans, regardless of the ecological consequences.

To this, a retired teacher, Boorayya Master, who served for 35 years, responds passionately: "Development? All we see is destruction. The forests have been felled, the hills excavated. What benefit has the common man actually gained? It's the industrialists and foreign companies who are amassing crores. No one cares what happens to the earth. And what can we do? That white man (Western ideology) forced it on our heads, and we've started believing in it blindly" (Pg. 25).

Through these words, the writer criticizes how development, modelled after Western industrial standards, is being blindly pursued, often at the expense of our natural wealth. Boorayya, even after retirement, maintains a five-acre organic farm with fruit trees like mango, jackfruit, and sapota. This lifestyle stands as a model of environmentally conscious living.

Quoting Karl Marx, "Man exists as a part of Nature. Hence, if mankind is to survive, it must remain in constant dialogue and connection with Nature". The character of Boorayya exemplifies this philosophy in action. During a public hearing for a proposed development project, a collector argues: "The world is advancing with modern technology. If we want to grow, we must adopt the same. Foreign investment will flow in. How can anyone object to such a large-scale project just because birds might be affected? We must change our outdated thinking. We must do whatever it takes for development!" (Pg. 28).

But true development, the author contends, lies not in building skyscrapers or sacrificing the environment, but in enhancing and preserving our natural wealth. Boorayya's voice strikes with pain: "Even if the ground beneath our feet is collapsing, man wants to keep climbing higher" (Pg. 26). In one of the story's most powerful lines, Boorayya asks, "Is it worth bearing such environmental loss for the benefit of a few? Nature can meet human needs - but not their greed", echoing Mahatma Gandhi.

The story reminds us that real development must serve collective well-being, not just individual ambition. When someone asks, "Should we stall progress for a few migratory birds?" Boorayya responds: "If today we disregard birds, tomorrow we may disregard certain communities or races. Who decides what species deserve to exist?" (Pg. 38). Through these chilling words, the author implies that unchecked greed could lead to ethical and moral decay.

"Ooru Godaari - A Village built on the Banks of a River. In "Ooru Godaari", the author describes a peaceful village located along the banks of the Godavari River, where both humans and animals coexist in harmony. The government, in the name of development, plans to build a dam across the river, claiming it will generate multiple revenue streams. However, it completely ignores the devastating consequences such a project would have on local communities and ecosystems.

The dam would inundate agricultural fields, uproot agrarian livelihoods, and disrupt the survival of flora and fauna that depend on the river. The people, used to clean air, fresh water, and the simple warmth of village life, are now pushed toward emotional and mental distress. "Villages are the backbone of the nation" - this ancient saying now seems hollow in the face of modern urban greed.

Ironically, governments that are meant to protect Nature's beauty are ones responsible for destroying it. Both these stories ("Haddu" and "Ooru Godaari") show how globalization does not just reshape economies - it reshapes societies, communities, and the ecological fabric of entire regions.

A Powerful Environmental Message Addepalli Prabhu's Seamen Kathalu resonates with a single powerful idea: true progress is only possible when achieved in harmony with the environment. While globalization has strengthened global economies, it has also pushed ecosystems toward irreversible damage. His stories repeatedly emphasize the urgent need to strike a balance between development and ecology. As the quote from Brainy aptly summarizes: "Globalization will make our societies more creative and prosperous, but also more vulnerable".

This reality is captured vividly throughout the Seamen Kathalu collection - a compelling literary voice warning us before it's too late.

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