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Research Article

Invisible Ecologies: Ecological Objects as Agents of Ecofeminist Resistance in Narayan's *Kocharethi*

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Abstract

This paper examines Narayan's *Kocharethi* through the lens of Material Ecofeminism to explore the agency of everyday material objects in sustaining indigenous ecological knowledge and women's environmental practices. While existing ecofeminist scholarship on the novel primarily foregrounds the interconnected oppression of women and nature, this study shifts attention to the often-overlooked role of ordinary objects such as bamboo baskets, earthen pots, seeds, medicinal herbs, and forest tools. It introduces the analytical category of Ecological Objects to describe material entities that preserve ecological memory, embody indigenous knowledge systems, and mediate resistance against patriarchal and exploitative forces. Drawing on Material Ecofeminism, Thing Theory, New Materialism, and Feminist Political Ecology, the paper argues that these objects possess material agency that extends beyond symbolic representation. Through qualitative textual analysis and close reading, the study demonstrates that *Kocharethi* presents ecological resistance as a collaborative process involving women, nature, and material culture. By foregrounding the significance of ecological objects, this research contributes a fresh interpretive framework to ecofeminist literary criticism and expands current discussions in environmental humanities and indigenous studies.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Ecofeminism emerged in the late twentieth century as a critical framework that examines the interconnected oppression of women and nature under patriarchal systems. Scholars such as Françoise d'Eaubonne, Vandana Shiva, Karen Warren, and Val Plumwood have argued that the domination of women and the exploitation of the environment are structurally linked through hierarchies that privilege masculinity, rationality, and economic power over care, embodiment, and ecological interdependence. In recent decades, ecofeminism has expanded beyond activism into the broader field of environmental humanities, an interdisciplinary domain that brings together literature, philosophy, history, anthropology, and ecology to understand how cultural narratives shape human relationships with the natural world. Environmental humanities scholars emphasise that ecological crises are not merely scientific problems but also ethical, political, and cultural questions that demand new ways of reading texts, landscapes, and material practices.

Within this interdisciplinary context, literary studies have increasingly engaged with what is often called the material turn. Traditional literary criticism tended to privilege language, symbolism, and representation, treating objects as passive elements that reflected human meaning. Influenced by New Materialism, Thing Theory, and Material Ecofeminism, contemporary criticism now recognises that matter is not inert; objects participate in social, ecological, and affective networks. Thinkers such as Jane Bennett, Bill Brown, Stacy Alaimo, and Serenella Iovino argue that material entities possess forms of agency that shape human experience and ecological relations. This shift from representation to material agency allows literary critics to ask not only what objects symbolise but also what they do within a text—how they preserve memory, sustain communities, mediate power, and participate in ecological processes.

Narayan's *Kocharethi* provides a particularly rich site for such an inquiry. As one of the earliest novels in Malayalam to foreground the life of the Malayaraya tribal community, *Kocharethi* offers an intimate portrayal of indigenous ecological practices, forest-based livelihoods, and women's everyday interactions with material objects. The novel is filled with bamboo baskets, earthen pots, seeds, medicinal herbs, forest tools, and other ordinary objects that are deeply embedded in the community's ecological world. Rather than appearing as decorative details, these objects organise labour, transmit traditional knowledge, preserve food and medicine, and sustain collective survival. The novel's focus on indigenous life, environmental change, and women's embodied labour makes it an ideal text for examining how material culture participates in ecological resistance.

Existing scholarship on *Kocharethi* has largely concentrated on tribal identity, ecofeminism, environmental justice, postcolonial marginality, and indigenous knowledge systems. While these studies have made valuable contributions, they often treat material objects as background elements or symbolic markers of tribal culture. Very few studies investigate the active role of everyday objects in shaping ecological consciousness and

women's environmental agency. The present study identifies this gap and proposes the analytical category of Ecological Objects to describe ordinary material entities that preserve indigenous ecological knowledge, sustain women's environmental practices, and mediate resistance against ecological degradation, patriarchal domination, and capitalist exploitation. By focusing on the agency of objects, this paper extends ecofeminist criticism beyond the woman–nature binary and contributes to current debates in environmental humanities and material ecocriticism.

This study aims to examine how everyday objects in *Kocharethi* function as ecological agents within the novel's ecofeminist framework. The study seeks to demonstrate that material objects are not passive symbols but active participants in ecological and social relations. Specifically, the objectives are: (1) to identify and classify the ecological objects represented in the novel; (2) to analyse how these objects preserve indigenous ecological knowledge and cultural memory; (3) to explore the relationship between women, material objects, and environmental practices; and (4) to show how the concept of Ecological Objects expands the scope of Material Ecofeminism in the study of contemporary Indian literature. Through this approach, the paper argues that *Kocharethi* imagines ecological resistance as a collaborative process involving women, forests, and material culture, thereby offering a distinctive contribution to ecofeminist literary studies.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Ecofeminist Studies on Kocharethi

Narayan's *Kocharethi* has received increasing scholarly attention for its portrayal of the Malayaraya tribal community and its intimate representation of the relationship between women, nature, and indigenous culture. Most ecofeminist readings of the novel examine the interconnected exploitation of women and the environment under patriarchal and capitalist systems. Scholars have highlighted how the forest functions as a living ecosystem that shapes the community's identity, livelihood, and cultural practices, while women emerge as custodians of ecological knowledge and environmental sustainability. Existing studies also emphasise themes such as tribal displacement, ecological degradation, environmental justice, and indigenous resistance to modernisation.

In addition to ecofeminist interpretations, researchers have approached *Kocharethi* through postcolonial ecocriticism, subaltern studies, and indigenous studies. These perspectives underscore the novel's critique of state intervention, deforestation, and the gradual erosion of tribal lifeworlds. Women's everyday labour—collecting forest produce, cultivating crops, preserving medicinal knowledge, and managing household resources—is frequently interpreted as a form of ecological stewardship. Although these studies successfully establish the close relationship between women and nature, they generally privilege human actors and landscapes while paying comparatively little attention to the material objects that facilitate these ecological relationships.

Consequently, baskets, earthen pots, seeds, herbs, and traditional tools often remain descriptive background elements rather than active components of ecological resistance.

2.2 Material Ecofeminism

Material Ecofeminism represents a significant development in contemporary ecofeminist thought by moving beyond symbolic associations between women and nature toward an understanding of matter as dynamic and agentic. Developed primarily by Stacy Alaimo and Serenella Iovino, Material Ecofeminism challenges anthropocentric assumptions that regard nature and material objects as passive resources available for human exploitation. Instead, it argues that human and non-human bodies exist within interconnected material networks where agency is distributed across living and non-living entities. Unlike earlier strands of cultural ecofeminism, Material Ecofeminism focuses on the material interactions among bodies, landscapes, objects, and ecosystems. Everyday material entities are understood as participants in ecological processes rather than inert possessions. This perspective is particularly valuable for literary analysis because it encourages critics to investigate how material objects influence social relationships, preserve ecological memory, and shape environmental ethics. Within *Kocharethi*, such an approach enables a reconsideration of ordinary domestic and ecological objects as active participants in the community's survival and environmental resilience rather than as mere symbols of tribal life.

2.3 Thing Theory

Thing Theory, developed by Bill Brown, provides an important framework for understanding the cultural and material significance of objects in literary texts. Brown distinguishes between an "object" and a "thing," arguing that an object becomes a thing when it exceeds its ordinary utilitarian function and demands critical attention. Things reveal hidden social, historical, and cultural relationships that often remain invisible within everyday life. Consequently, literary objects should not be interpreted merely as decorative details but as entities that shape narratives, identities, and power structures.

Thing Theory has significantly influenced literary criticism by shifting attention from human subjects to the material world. Rather than asking what an object represents symbolically, critics examine how it acts within the narrative and how it influences relationships among characters, communities, and environments. In *Kocharethi*, bamboo baskets, earthen vessels, medicinal herbs, and agricultural tools function as more than household implements; they organise labour, preserve ecological knowledge, and sustain collective identity. Their significance lies not only in what they symbolise but also in what they accomplish within the ecological and cultural life of the Malayaraya community.

2.4 New Materialism

New Materialism has emerged as an influential theoretical movement that challenges traditional distinctions between

human subjects and material objects. Thinkers such as Jane Bennett argue that matter possesses "vibrant" qualities, meaning that material entities actively participate in shaping ecological and social realities. Agency, therefore, is not confined exclusively to human beings but is distributed across complex assemblages of people, objects, animals, plants, and landscapes.

Within literary studies, New Materialism encourages scholars to explore how texts portray material interactions rather than exclusively focusing on human intention. This perspective recognises that ordinary objects influence emotions, behaviours, cultural practices, and environmental relationships. Such an approach is particularly relevant to indigenous narratives, where human existence is understood as inseparable from forests, rivers, plants, animals, and everyday material culture. Applying New Materialism to *Kocharethi* enables a deeper understanding of how material objects contribute to ecological continuity and community resilience while challenging anthropocentric modes of interpretation.

2.5 Indigenous Ecological Knowledge

Indigenous ecological knowledge refers to the cumulative environmental wisdom developed by indigenous communities through long-term interaction with local ecosystems. This knowledge encompasses sustainable resource management, medicinal practices, biodiversity conservation, seasonal cycles, seed preservation, and ethical relationships with the natural world. Unlike modern extractive models of development, indigenous ecological knowledge is grounded in reciprocity, collective responsibility, and ecological balance.

In *Kocharethi*, indigenous ecological knowledge is embedded within everyday practices rather than formal institutions. Women play a central role in transmitting this knowledge across generations through food preparation, seed preservation, medicinal healing, forest gathering, and household management. Importantly, this knowledge is mediated through material objects such as baskets used for gathering forest produce, earthen pots for storing food and water, seeds preserved for cultivation, and medicinal herbs collected from the forest. These objects function as repositories of ecological memory, enabling the continuity of sustainable environmental practices despite increasing social and ecological pressures. Thus, indigenous knowledge in the novel is inseparable from material culture.

2.6 Gap Analysis

A review of existing scholarship demonstrates that *Kocharethi* has been extensively examined through ecofeminism, ecocriticism, postcolonial studies, and indigenous studies. Researchers have successfully explored themes such as environmental degradation, women's relationship with nature, tribal identity, ecological justice, and indigenous resistance. Similarly, Material Ecofeminism, Thing Theory, and New Materialism have individually expanded literary criticism by emphasising the agency of matter and the significance of material culture. However, these theoretical perspectives have

rarely been integrated in the study of *Kocharethi*. Existing research largely privileges forests, landscapes, and human characters, while everyday material objects remain marginal to critical discussion. The ecological functions of baskets, earthen pots, seeds, medicinal herbs, and traditional tools have not been systematically analysed as active participants in environmental resistance. This absence represents a significant gap in current scholarship.

To address this limitation, the present study proposes the analytical category of Ecological Objects. The term refers to ordinary material entities that preserve indigenous ecological knowledge, sustain women's environmental practices, and mediate resistance against ecological degradation, patriarchal domination, and capitalist exploitation. By synthesising Material Ecofeminism, Thing Theory, New Materialism, and Feminist Political Ecology, this study shifts attention from symbolic representations of nature to the material agency of everyday objects. In doing so, it offers a new interpretive framework for reading *Kocharethi* and contributes to the expanding dialogue between ecofeminism, environmental humanities, and material culture studies.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study adopts an interdisciplinary theoretical framework that integrates Material Ecofeminism, Thing Theory, New Materialism, and Feminist Political Ecology to examine the role of material objects in Narayan's *Kocharethi*. While each framework offers a distinct perspective on the relationship between humans, matter, and the environment, their convergence provides a comprehensive lens for understanding how everyday objects function as active participants in ecological resistance. Building upon these theoretical perspectives, this study introduces the analytical category of Ecological Objects to explain the agency of ordinary material entities in preserving indigenous ecological knowledge and sustaining women's environmental practices.

3.1 Material Ecofeminism

Material Ecofeminism emerged as a significant development within contemporary ecofeminist thought, challenging the tendency of earlier ecofeminist approaches to emphasise symbolic associations between women and nature. Scholars such as Stacy Alaimo and Serenella Iovino argue that both human and non-human bodies exist within dynamic material networks where agency is distributed rather than exclusively human. Matter is not passive or inert; instead, it actively shapes ecological processes, social relationships, and ethical responsibilities. A central concept in Material Ecofeminism is Alaimo's notion of trans-corporeality, which emphasises the continuous exchange between human bodies and the material environment. Human existence is inseparable from air, water, soil, plants, animals, and material objects that collectively influence health, identity, and survival. Similarly, Iovino argues that matter possesses narrative capacity because landscapes, objects, and ecosystems carry histories of environmental interaction and cultural memory. Within *Kocharethi*, Material

Ecofeminism enables a reading of ordinary objects as ecological participants rather than passive possessions. Bamboo baskets, earthen pots, medicinal herbs, seeds, and traditional tools are deeply embedded within the material life of the Malayaraya community. These objects sustain everyday ecological practices, preserve indigenous environmental knowledge, and facilitate the reciprocal relationship between women and the forest. Consequently, they emerge as active agents that contribute to ecological continuity and cultural resilience.

3.2 Thing Theory

Thing Theory, developed by Bill Brown, shifts critical attention from symbolic interpretation toward the material presence of objects. Brown distinguishes between an object, which primarily serves a utilitarian function, and a thing, which becomes visible when it exceeds ordinary use and reveals its cultural, historical, or emotional significance. Rather than asking what objects merely represent, Thing Theory investigates how they shape human experiences, social relationships, and systems of meaning. This theoretical approach challenges anthropocentric literary criticism by recognising that material objects possess the capacity to influence narrative structures and human behaviour. Objects become sites where memory, identity, labour, and power intersect. Their significance lies not solely in symbolic representation but in their active participation within everyday life. In *Kocharethi*, objects such as baskets, agricultural implements, cooking vessels, and medicinal containers transcend their practical functions. They organise domestic labour, facilitate sustainable resource management, preserve ecological knowledge, and strengthen communal identity. Through Thing Theory, these material entities can be understood as "things" that actively mediate relationships among women, forests, and tribal communities. Their agency extends beyond symbolism to become an essential component of ecological survival.

3.3 New Materialism

New Materialism represents a broader philosophical movement that reconsiders the relationship between humans and the material world. Rejecting Cartesian dualisms that separate mind from matter and culture from nature, New Materialist thinkers argue that agency is distributed across human and non-human assemblages. Among its leading scholars, Jane Bennett introduces the concept of vibrant matter, asserting that material entities possess capacities to affect and be affected within ecological networks. Unlike traditional human-centred theories, New Materialism emphasises relationality, interdependence, and the vitality of material existence. Material objects influence social life not because humans assign meaning to them but because they actively participate in networks of ecological interaction. Agency therefore emerges through relationships among people, objects, environments, and other living organisms. Applying this perspective to *Kocharethi* reveals that ecological life is sustained through continuous interactions

among humans, forests, animals, plants, and material objects. Seeds regenerate agriculture, medicinal herbs sustain health, baskets enable forest gathering, and earthen pots preserve food and water. These objects possess ecological significance because they actively participate in sustaining life rather than merely serving human needs. New Materialism thus strengthens the argument that material objects contribute to environmental continuity and community resilience.

3.4 Feminist Political Ecology

Feminist Political Ecology, developed through the works of scholars such as Bina Agarwal, examines how gender influences access to natural resources, environmental knowledge, and ecological decision-making. It argues that women's environmental experiences are shaped by social structures, economic inequalities, and cultural practices rather than by essential biological connections to nature. Women's ecological knowledge emerges through their everyday responsibilities in agriculture, food production, water collection, seed preservation, and forest management. Unlike essentialist interpretations of ecofeminism, Feminist Political Ecology emphasises that environmental knowledge is socially produced through lived experience and daily interaction with local ecosystems. This perspective highlights indigenous women as knowledgeable environmental actors whose ecological practices contribute significantly to sustainable resource management. Within *Kocharethi*, women perform diverse ecological responsibilities that sustain both household and community life. Their knowledge of medicinal plants, seasonal cycles, food preservation, seed storage, and forest resources is transmitted through routine material practices. Material objects become indispensable tools through which ecological knowledge is produced, preserved, and communicated across generations. Consequently, Feminist Political Ecology provides the socio-political context necessary for understanding the relationship between women, labour, and material culture in the novel.

3.5 Introducing the Analytical Category of Ecological Objects

Building upon the intersections of Material Ecofeminism, Thing Theory, New Materialism, and Feminist Political Ecology, this study proposes the analytical category of Ecological Objects as its primary conceptual contribution. For the purpose of this study, Ecological Objects are defined as: Ordinary material entities embedded within everyday life that preserve indigenous ecological knowledge, sustain women's environmental practices, and exercise material agency by mediating resistance against ecological degradation, patriarchal domination, and capitalist exploitation. This concept differs from conventional understandings of literary objects in several important ways. First, ecological objects are not passive symbols representing tribal identity or environmental consciousness. Instead, they actively participate in ecological relationships by enabling sustainable interactions between humans and the natural world. Second, their significance

emerges through everyday practices rather than extraordinary events. Finally, they function simultaneously as material artefacts, repositories of cultural memory, and agents of ecological continuity. In *Kocharethi*, ecological objects include bamboo baskets used for gathering forest produce, earthen pots employed for storing food and water, seeds preserved for cultivation, medicinal herbs collected from the forest, and traditional agricultural implements. These objects embody accumulated indigenous knowledge, support women's ecological labour, and maintain reciprocal relationships between the Malayaraya community and its environment. Their agency lies not in autonomous action but in their capacity to mediate ecological practices, shape human behaviour, preserve cultural memory, and facilitate sustainable coexistence.

The concept of Ecological Objects therefore synthesises insights from the four theoretical frameworks employed in this study. Material Ecofeminism explains the agency of matter; Thing Theory reveals the cultural significance of everyday objects; New Materialism recognises the vitality of material entities; and Feminist Political Ecology situates these objects within women's environmental knowledge and lived experience. Together, these perspectives establish a comprehensive interpretive framework for analysing *Kocharethi* and demonstrate that ecological resistance in the novel is enacted not only through women and forests but also through the ordinary material objects that sustain indigenous ecological life. Thus, the analytical category of Ecological Objects expands the scope of ecofeminist literary criticism by shifting attention from symbolic representations of nature to the material agencies embedded within everyday ecological practices. It offers a new perspective for understanding how literature represents the interconnected relationships among matter, memory, gender, and environmental sustainability, thereby contributing to ongoing discussions in environmental humanities, material culture studies, and contemporary ecofeminist theory.

4. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative textual research methodology to examine the role of material objects in Narayan's *Kocharethi* through an ecofeminist perspective. Since the primary objective is to interpret literary representation rather than measure empirical data, qualitative analysis provides the most appropriate methodological approach. The research investigates how everyday material objects contribute to ecological knowledge, indigenous identity, and women's environmental practices within the narrative.

4.1 Qualitative Textual Analysis

The study adopts qualitative textual analysis to interpret the meanings, functions, and ecological significance of material objects represented in *Kocharethi*. Rather than quantifying textual elements, this method explores recurring patterns, narrative contexts, and symbolic as well as material relationships between characters, objects, and the environment. The analysis focuses on selected episodes involving everyday

objects such as bamboo baskets, earthen pots, seeds, medicinal herbs, forest produce, and agricultural tools to understand their contribution to ecological continuity and indigenous life.

4.2 Close Reading

Close reading serves as the principal analytical method for examining the novel. Individual passages are analysed in detail to understand how language, imagery, narrative structure, and material descriptions construct ecological meaning. Attention is paid not only to the presence of objects but also to their interaction with women, forests, domestic spaces, and community practices. This detailed examination enables the study to demonstrate that objects function beyond their utilitarian purposes and actively participate in the ecological narrative of the novel.

4.3 Ecofeminist Criticism

The research is primarily grounded in ecofeminist criticism, which examines the interconnected oppression of women and nature under patriarchal structures. The study investigates how women's environmental labour, indigenous knowledge, and ecological relationships are represented through material culture. Ecofeminist criticism provides the ethical and political framework for understanding the reciprocal relationship between women, ecological sustainability, and everyday material practices depicted in *Kocharethi*.

4.4 Material Culture Analysis

Material culture analysis forms the central methodological component of this research. Drawing from Material Ecofeminism, Thing Theory, and New Materialism, the study examines objects not merely as symbols but as active participants in cultural and ecological systems. Each selected object is analysed according to its ecological function, cultural significance, relationship with women's labour, contribution to indigenous knowledge, and role in resisting ecological degradation. This approach enables the study to identify how ordinary material objects become Ecological Objects that mediate relationships among people, nature, and community.

5. ANALYSIS

5.1 Objects of Survival

The narrative of *Kocharethi* demonstrates that survival within the Malayaraya community is deeply dependent upon everyday material objects closely connected to the forest ecosystem. Objects such as bamboo baskets, earthen pots, agricultural implements, and food storage vessels facilitate the community's daily existence by enabling food collection, cultivation, storage, and water preservation. These objects are inseparable from indigenous livelihood because they embody sustainable practices developed through generations of interaction with the natural environment.

Women's daily labour is mediated through these objects. Bamboo baskets are used for collecting forest produce, while earthen pots preserve water and food without disrupting ecological balance. Unlike industrial commodities associated

with consumer culture, these indigenous objects originate from locally available natural resources and maintain reciprocal relationships with the environment. Their continued use reflects a sustainable ecological ethic that resists extractive models of development. Consequently, these objects become material foundations of survival, linking domestic life directly with ecological sustainability.

5.2 Objects of Ecological Knowledge

One of the novel's significant contributions lies in its portrayal of indigenous ecological knowledge as material rather than purely oral or intellectual. Seeds, medicinal herbs, forest plants, and traditional agricultural tools function as repositories of environmental knowledge accumulated through generations of lived experience. Knowledge regarding seasonal cycles, medicinal properties of plants, methods of cultivation, and sustainable harvesting practices is embedded within these material entities.

Women play a crucial role in preserving and transmitting this ecological knowledge. Their interactions with seeds, herbs, and household implements constitute forms of environmental education passed from one generation to another through practice rather than formal instruction. Material objects therefore become pedagogical instruments that preserve ecological wisdom. Instead of existing as passive resources, they actively participate in sustaining biodiversity, food security, and environmental continuity.

5.3 Objects of Memory

Memory in *Kocharethi* extends beyond individual recollection to encompass collective ecological and cultural memory preserved through material culture. Household vessels, agricultural tools, seed collections, and traditional implements embody the historical experiences of the Malayaraya community. These objects preserve memories of ancestral practices, environmental ethics, and cultural traditions threatened by modernisation and ecological displacement. Unlike written archives, these material objects function as living repositories of indigenous history. Every act of cultivation, food preparation, seed preservation, or forest gathering reinforces communal memory and strengthens cultural identity. Women's everyday engagement with these objects ensures the continuity of ecological traditions despite changing socio-economic conditions. Material objects therefore become silent narrators of indigenous history, preserving ecological knowledge that cannot be adequately documented through written records alone.

5.4 Objects of Resistance

The novel also demonstrates that ordinary material objects become instruments of ecological and cultural resistance. Traditional agricultural implements, gathering baskets, medicinal plants, and seed varieties enable the community to maintain autonomy over food production and forest resources despite increasing external pressures. These objects support

sustainable livelihoods while resisting the commodification of nature promoted by capitalist development.

Women's environmental practices represent acts of resistance precisely because they continue to rely upon indigenous ecological systems rather than exploitative economic structures. Material objects facilitate this resistance by sustaining traditional knowledge, preserving biodiversity, and reinforcing community resilience. Rather than functioning merely as domestic tools, they become ecological instruments that challenge environmental degradation, cultural erasure, and patriarchal systems of domination. Their resistance is quiet yet persistent, embedded within everyday ecological practices rather than overt political confrontation.

5.5 Ecological Objects as Material Agents

The preceding analyses demonstrate that the material entities represented in *Kocharethi* cannot be adequately understood as passive objects or symbolic artefacts. Instead, they function as Ecological Objects possessing material agency within the ecological and cultural networks of the novel. Their agency does not imply independent consciousness but refers to their capacity to influence ecological practices, preserve environmental knowledge, shape social relationships, and sustain community survival.

Ecological Objects actively mediate interactions between women and the natural world. Bamboo baskets facilitate sustainable gathering; earthen pots preserve essential resources; medicinal herbs maintain community health; seeds ensure agricultural continuity; and traditional tools enable environmentally responsible cultivation. Collectively, these objects participate in maintaining reciprocal relationships among humans, forests, and ecosystems. Their material presence sustains ecological resilience while simultaneously preserving indigenous identity and cultural memory. Thus, *Kocharethi* presents ecological resistance as a collaborative process involving women, forests, and material culture. The concept of Ecological Objects enables a deeper understanding of how literature represents ecological agency beyond human actors and expands ecofeminist discussions of environmental justice.

6. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that *Kocharethi* significantly extends conventional ecofeminist representations by foregrounding the agency of everyday material objects. Rather than depicting ecological resistance solely through women or natural landscapes, the novel presents material culture as an active participant in sustaining ecological relationships. This perspective contributes to three important areas of contemporary literary scholarship.

6.1 Contribution to Ecofeminism

Traditional ecofeminist criticism has primarily emphasised the symbolic association between women and nature. This study broadens that perspective by demonstrating that material objects also participate in ecological resistance. Through the

concept of Ecological Objects, the paper argues that ecological agency is distributed across women, forests, and everyday material culture. Consequently, ecofeminism may be understood not merely as a relationship between women and nature but as a dynamic network involving humans, non-human environments, and material entities.

6.2 Implications for Environmental Humanities

The study contributes to environmental humanities by illustrating how literature represents ecological relationships through material culture. It demonstrates that environmental sustainability is embedded within everyday practices involving domestic and ecological objects. By foregrounding indigenous material culture, the research emphasises that ecological knowledge is preserved not only through oral traditions but also through material practices and everyday interactions with objects. This perspective encourages environmental humanities scholars to examine literature through the interconnected lenses of ecology, materiality, and indigenous knowledge systems.

6.3 Extending Material Ecofeminist Criticism

Material Ecofeminism argues that matter possesses agency within ecological systems. This study extends that argument by introducing Ecological Objects as a focused analytical category for literary criticism. While Material Ecofeminism generally addresses the agency of matter, the present framework specifically examines ordinary objects that preserve ecological knowledge and facilitate women's environmental practices. The concept therefore provides a practical interpretive tool for analysing material culture in literary texts and opens new possibilities for future ecofeminist scholarship on indigenous and environmental narratives.

7. CONCLUSION

This study has examined Narayan's *Kocharethi* through the integrated perspectives of Material Ecofeminism, Thing Theory, New Materialism, and Feminist Political Ecology to investigate the ecological significance of everyday material objects. Moving beyond conventional ecofeminist readings that privilege women and landscapes, the research has demonstrated that ordinary objects actively participate in sustaining indigenous ecological knowledge, preserving cultural memory, and enabling environmental resistance.

The introduction of the analytical category Ecological Objects constitutes the principal contribution of this study. Defined as ordinary material entities that preserve indigenous ecological knowledge, sustain women's environmental practices, and mediate resistance against ecological degradation, patriarchal domination, and capitalist exploitation, Ecological Objects offer a new interpretive framework for ecofeminist literary criticism. Through the analysis of bamboo baskets, earthen pots, seeds, medicinal herbs, and traditional tools, the study has shown that material culture functions as an essential ecological agent rather than as passive symbolism.

The findings reaffirm that ecological sustainability within *Kocharethi* is achieved through reciprocal relationships among

women, forests, and material culture. Indigenous environmental knowledge survives because it is embedded within everyday objects and practices that connect communities to their ecosystems. By foregrounding the agency of material objects, this research expands contemporary ecofeminist discourse and contributes to the growing intersections among environmental humanities, material culture studies, indigenous studies, and literary ecocriticism.

Future research may apply the concept of Ecological Objects to other indigenous, postcolonial, and environmental narratives to further investigate how material culture shapes ecological consciousness across diverse literary traditions. Such studies will continue to deepen our understanding of the dynamic relationships among matter, memory, gender, and environmental justice in contemporary literature.

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