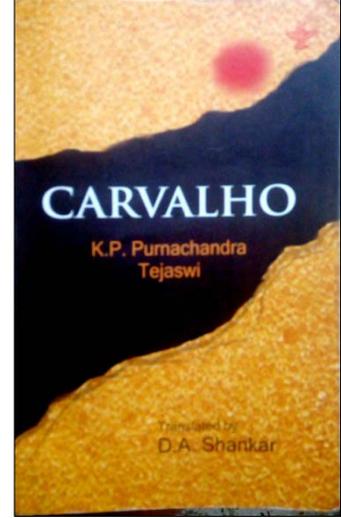


Kannada Novella in Translationby **Rindon Kundu**¹*Carvalho* by **K.P. Purnachandra Tejaswi**.Trans. **D.A. Shankar**.New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi. 2014. Print.
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Before starting my pilgrimage through the world of the dense rainy forests of Western Ghats as pictured in the novella titled *Carvalho* (1980), written by distinguished Sahitya Akademi awardee Kannada novelist and short story-writer K.P. Purnachandra Tejaswi, let me express my sincere apology that I am not familiar with the Kannada language and therefore will solely rely on the English translation (2014) of the aforementioned novella. The English translation is by the noted poet, playwright, educationist and translator, D.A. Shankar.

In the introductory note, the translator rightly points out that, “*Carvalho* presents many worlds: the dream world, the world of science and mystery and the workaday world of normal simple human beings” (Tejaswi viii). It takes me back to the age of Darwinian Theory of Evolution as, like Charles Darwin, Carvalho, the eponymous character of the book, undertakes a journey in search of the Truth of human existence. This evocative novel is set in a faraway village in the Moodigere district which is situated in the foothills of the Western Ghats. The story starts with the narrator, a well-educated farmer, who came to Moodigere Bee-Keepers’ Society in search of authentic honey for his ailing father and in due course met Mandanna, who, to the narrator, was nothing but a rural truant, whimsical in nature. Later, the narrator encountered Carvalho who is ‘an Officer at the Paddy Research Centre’ (p 11) and ‘a great botanist, an entomologist of great renown’ (p 11) and most importantly the Guru

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of Mandanna. Though Mandanna, bee-keeper by profession, has been considered as a ne'er-do-well vagabond by the local commoners and friends, the narrator was surprised to see that Carvalho, a scientist with an international reputation, was describing Mandanna as 'a born naturalist' (p 57), a man with the keen 'art of observation' (p 57) and 'an extraordinary natural scientist' (p 58). The author brilliantly juxtaposes the popular notion about Mandanna which is derived by the explicit depiction of his personal life, hilarious wedding and his relationship with his new wife and in-laws with the impression he creates on a man of science like Carvalho who seems to understand Mandanna in a completely new light. For Carvalho, Mandanna's vagabondish nature has a different meaning altogether. It is nothing less than scientific research. Later on, we, the readers, also come across other important characters of the novella such as cook-cum-expert-tree-climber, bird catcher, bow-legged, bent and curved Biryani Kariappa (p 65); Prabhakara, the official movie cameraman; Yenka, the snake-catcher; Kiwi, the narrator's dog and others. As the story progresses, we come to know that the scientist Carvalho was engaged in a quest tracing the endangered flying lizard, which his 'disciple' Mandanna had seen in the jungle of Norway. The rest of the story revolves around this mystical search for this extinct species as Carvalho tries to perceive and record a new evolutionary order in nature. As a few important characters of the novel along with Carvalho, Mandanna and the narrator begins the journey into the thick forest of Norway, the book grips the readers' minds with intense suspense and alacrity and they keep pondering on the success of the expedition which began in search of an ancient creature which no human eyes has ever beheld. At the end of the story, the readers find out that the larger issue does not lie in the materiality of finding the flying lizard rather it was a quest for experiential Truth about the ceaseless evolutionary process.

Simply written, unpretentious, *Carvalho* weaves a web of curiosity around the readers as all enticing stories do. Throughout the book, the author tries to re-establish the superiority of Nature over human control and tries to question the anthropocentric nature of the world. There is an attempt on the part of the writer to fuse the evolutionary history of human civilisation with the contemporary socio-political power structure by drawing extensively from the knowledge created by modern science as well as close observation of rural characters. The meticulous detail with which the novella re-creates the flora and fauna of the Western Ghats is remarkable. Over the past decade and more, a new interdisciplinary area of

research, named Environmental Humanities or Ecological Humanities, has been emerging in the realm of humanities and social science disciplines and Tejaswi's novella has an intimate connection with this newfound genre. This widely read novella also shows the link between 'ecology' and 'language' by depicting, as the translator describes, the 'interrelatedness ... among man, society, beliefs and superstitions and natural and manmade environmental aspects' (p vii) which in a way shape our language and in turn are shaped through language. In the last quarter of the 20th century the world has seen the increasingly rapid destruction of the ecological systems that support life in the name of development, a very few writers like Tejaswi have immersed themselves into the deeper intellectual pursuit, into the philosophy of Nature and in this respect Carvalho and Tejaswi become the single entity whose 'words reach us with the power of the sayings of our ancient Upanishadic sages' (p 84). On the whole, K.P. Tejaswi's *Carvalho* engages with the ontological quest regarding metaphysical self knowledge – who we are, where from we come and where will we go.