

HYDRO-HEGEMONY AND WAR: AN ECO-CRITICAL CRITIQUE OF CAPITALIST AND MARXIST TRENDS IN ANIMATED MOVIE 'RANGO'

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Abstract

Rango, an animated movie, has successfully attracted the attention of the critics of the time and they have put the movie under different critical structures such as psychological and feminist perspectives. However, the role of environment, means and objectives to control different blessings of nature, goes unexplored. In Rango, the resources of water are controlled and manipulated by the character which reserves all the capital of the society. Since nature, environment and natural resources are included in the plot of the movie, it may well be put to an eco-critical test. Water exploitation has become a constant threat to ecosystem. Those who hold water hegemony forget that it is going to bring about an overall environmental destruction. In Rango, capitalist means are applied to establish and maintain hydro-hegemony. This research explores an eco-critical perspective, aims to discover the hydro-hegemony of the capitalist elite to exploit the local community through controlling water resources. This exploitation can be seen in various forms throughout the world. This study also evaluates the impact of water or hydro politics on construction of individual identities. The issue of water is global and when politics is played on the issue of basic necessity, the society is affected severely. Since the sources and resources of water are on the decline across the globe, water is being exploited by the powerful circles of the world society. The Dirt may be seen as a miniature of the whole globe. Hence the focus of this study will be an eco-critical analysis of the role of monetary and political power in establishment and maintenance of hydro-hegemony. It is a mixture of Capitalist and Marxist critique of the movie.

Keywords: Capitalism, Water, Hydro-Hegemony, Exploitation, Environmental Degradation.

Introduction:

With the ongoing situation around the world, the constant war rages and fighting to grasp the remaining resources left; our world is clearly at the brink of war. Hydro-hegemony is a concept relating to the water crisis many countries are facing. Hydro being defined as water and hegemony implies to a state of power over others by obtaining dominance. If one combines hydro and hegemony it relates to the water dominance as a resource over other nations or groups of people. Hydro-hegemony is a concept that applies to the current water issues many third world countries are facing. (Selby, 2013)

This paper investigate an in-depth analysis of the movie Rango that deal with the controlling water supply just to progress and leaving behind the community. Produced in 2011, Rango is an American animation that aims to identify one of the most pressing issues of our society- power and formation of hegemonies. Rango is a comedy drama highlighting the issue of

controlling and hoarding water supply for personal benefits. The animated movie was made within the themes of a classic western society. This fresh genre is made iconic by introducing animals from the desert that are fighting to maintain a decent life and lifestyle. The movie shows a detailed description of the western society working in between a desert (Zeitoun & Warner, 2006).

Ever since the development of human civilization, assertion of 'monopoly' through 'manipulation' of human needs has remained a significant feature in different eras. There have been such people who, using various power tactics, controlled items of human necessity in order to bring masses to subjugation. The most important source to control resources has been capital. The people with capitalist approach invest capital not only to earn more capital, but also to attain power which is yet another form of capital. These people have no moral scruples and they do not hesitate from being inhuman in their treatment of human beings (Harvey, 2005).

Rango, an animated movie released in 2010, is a reflection on the same ideas. Since it is an animated movie and the characters are not human beings, but animated beings, the message may be conveyed without adding any harshness to the topic in a playful manner. However, the tone, though playful, message is serious. It tells us that if such people as are power-thirsty are allowed to control the basic needs of life, they may cause a danger to all aspects of social life including culture, politics, economy and law and order situation. Rango, the movie highlights this aspect in a quite palpable manner.

Capitalism, apparently, offers every individual opportunity to own property and gather wealth to any possible extents. It seems an egalitarian economic system in which every individual has equal rights and opportunities to earn as much as possible, beyond the limits of needs of sustenance, and even beyond the boundaries of privilege. With these prospects, capitalism seems to dissolve all lines of demarcation in societies where capitalism has been opted as an economic system. It presents each and every individual a fair chance to utilize his abilities for his financial wellbeing. However, it is not all about physical and mental ability that an individual may prosper in a capitalist economy. Capital itself matters a lot. Those who hold the strings of purse, hold the nerve of the society. It has been presented in this movie in the Mayor's desire to get the town, Dirt, evacuated by creating an artificial shortage of water, and constructing a new city. He takes advantage of the incapacity of the townspeople. He has a band of gangsters at hand. He uses these gangsters to terrorize the weak people of the town. It gives the movie a Marxist perspective (Marx & Engels, 2002).

Since capitalism is the most widely adopted system of economy across the globe, and it is always linked with Marxist approach to show how it has been demolishing human values by limiting different sources of income to the chosen few, this study will develop awareness how capitalist campaigns may cause environmental changes (Buell, 2005).

Rango is a pet chameleon. While living in a safe glass terrarium, he has been telling his inanimate companions the imaginary stories of his bravery and mettle. He desires to be ranked among the most daring heroes of the history. However, deep inside him, something continues to realize him that the things are not the way he describes them. He has never been through any direct conflict that would be stupendous from historical point of view. A swashbuckling hero, acting out his fantasy by telling stories of daring to his inanimate companions. By chance, in an attempt to avoid a severe accident, Rango's terrarium is tossed out of the car. It crashes into the pieces, and Rango, dramatically surviving, lands on an unbearably hot desert somewhere in the

Southwest, near Dirt. As soon as Rango falls, he immediately comes across an armadillo who directs him to Dirt, a Western town facing shortage of water. .

Dirt is an ugly western town. The inhabitants of this town (almost all if not all) suffer from one or the other physical disability. The reason is that the villains of the town have enslaved the inhabitants of Dirt not only physically but also mentally. The tool they have applied for the purpose is 'water'. They have established 'hydro-hegemony' in Dirt. The villains of the town have created an artificial shortage of water. They have controlled the sources of water and give water to the inhabitants of the town on fixed days and times. When Rango arrives in Dirt, he comes to know that the people there need a sheriff. At the bar of the town, Rango poses to be an expert gunslinger. He relates imaginary stories of his heroic achievements. Also, he, accidentally, kills a large bird that has been a constant threat to the animal of Dirt. The townspeople begin to think of him as a hero. The Mayor of the town offers Rango to assume the charge of the sheriff of the town. Rango agrees to it, and enjoys his new role in the town.

It is perhaps Rango's hurt pride that forces him into an investigation, and he discovers that the Mayor has stopped the water supply. In fact, he wants the townspeople to leave Dirt so that he may develop a new and modern town there. It is this idea of the Mayor that is the key to this study. The Mayor wants to make use of his authority and earn capital. His desire to develop a new town is a capitalist urge. Since the Mayor has been exploiting the poor of the town, it also ensures that the movie may be analyzed in Marxist framework. The theme of Rango is mostly different from other animations including Despicable Me and Mega mind, which focus on the theme park rides and are corporate amusements. Rango on the other hand shows comedy along with a grave issue of water hoarding, hegemony and coercion.

Furthermore, in international politics, there have been such instances where natural resources of a people are controlled by more powerful countries. Also, the movie, with Hydro-hegemony as one of its themes, warns that, like the duel between Rango and Rattlesnake Jack, there may be wars on the issue of water.

Research Objective:

1. To explore the concept of hydro-hegemony as portrayed in the movie rango a mean to exploit people politically and socially.
2. To analyze capitalist ideologies through different characters in the movie leading to exploitation and environmental degradation.
3. To compare how capitalist principles shape characters' roles, motivations, and the social structure within the narrative.

Research Questions

1. How is the concept of hydro-hegemony portrayed in the movie Rango as a means of political and social exploitation?
2. In what ways do the characters in Rango reflect capitalist ideologies that contribute to exploitation and environmental degradation?
3. How do capitalist principles influence the roles, motivations, and social structures of characters within the narrative of Rango?

Literature Review:

The concept of hydro hegemony and the trans-water conflicts aims to explain how hydro-hegemony is used as a tool of exploitation. When defining hydro-hegemony, one needs to identify the concept of hegemony itself. Thinking on hydro-authority is likewise inclined to be bound up with pressure driven power legislative issues essentially at the dimension of universal waterway bowls. This disarray may come from the absence of lucidity of the expressions "authority" and "control", which are regularly conflated, even in course books. A portion of this disarray might be the consequence of various utilization of this term created on either side of the Atlantic Ocean, as depicted in the Oxford Concise Dictionary of Politics: "When one social class applies control over others past that represented by pressure or law, it might be depicted as domineering... In this manner the bourgeoisie was viewed as authoritative inside entrepreneur society by Gramsci, who trusted their capacity relied upon the saturation by average estimations of all organs of M. Zeitoun and J. Warner society" (Zeitoun & Warner, 2006).

Semantically, in Greek, a "hegemon" (from hegeisthai, "to lead") is somebody who directs the way, say a torchbearer in strange domain. All things considered, authority can be considered as initiative buttressed by power. Interestingly, predominance is characterized as administration buttressed by pressure. Hydro-authority is authority at the waterway bowl level, accomplished through water asset control systems, for example, asset catch, combination and regulation. The procedures are executed through a variety of strategies (e.g. coercion, pressure, arrangements, information development, and so on.) that are empowered by the abuse of existing force asymmetries inside a frail universal institutional setting (Forgacs, 2000; McLean & McMillan, 2009).

Drawing on Marx, the primary prerequisite is financial: that the material powers be adequately built up that individuals are equipped for taking care of the most squeezing social issues. Gramsci at that point proceeds to express that there are three dimensions of political advancement that a social gathering must go through with the end goal to build up the development that will enable change to be started (Gramsci, 1971). The first of these stages is alluded to as "economic-corporate". The corporatist is the thing that we may comprehend as oneself intrigued person. Individuals wind up associated at the financial corporate stage as an element of this personal responsibility, perceiving that they require the help of others to hold their own security. Exchange unionism is likely the clearest case of this, in any event on account of individuals joining an association because of a paranoid fear of pay cuts, conservation and so forth. One can likewise talk about here and now co-task between generally contending entrepreneurs in these terms. The point to stress is that at this phase of a gathering's recorded improvement there is no genuine feeling of solidarity between individuals.

Certain types of exchange unionism can likewise be viewed as precedents of industrialist authority. What Gramsci calls "syndicalism"; the view that the states of the specialists can be maximally inspired by means of the expanding intensity of the exchange associations - mirrors a social gathering (the laborers) left in the financial corporate phase of improvement due to the domineering impact of industrialists, particularly organized commerce advocates, in the domain of belief system. Hydro-hegemony is the need of the hour. One such model as of now demonstrating its effect is the 2030 Water Resources Group (2030 WRG), a worldwide open private-common society association, which underpins government endeavors to quicken water changes required for financial development and improvement. In South Africa, the 2030 WRG

has made the Strategic Water Partners Network to help advance national water objectives, including building up an arrangement to lessen water misfortunes in regions from the ebb and flow 32% to 18% by 2025, sparing the nation over R2.5 billion (200 million). Different tasks in the pipeline concentrated on treating and reusing mine water, and enhancing water-utilize proficiency in expansive scale horticulture water system plans (2030 WRG, n.d.).

At the Forum's Annual Meeting in Davos in January 2015, the Government of South Africa welcomed the Forum to help assemble a main system of private-area and different on-screen characters to join forces with governments and bolster the usage of a water and sanitation SDG through composed endeavors, trust building and new associations. This will be taken forward at the forthcoming World Economic Forum on Africa in Cape Town in June 2015, with the point of quickening open private participation for water and sanitation to understand the Sustainable Development Goals (World Economic Forum, 2015).

The United Nations has not exclusively known about the water emergency close yet it has found a way to assist the world adapt to the issue. The first is the improvement of UN-Water, an instrument planning the activities of the United Nations at executing the motivation set constantly Declaration identified with freshwater.

Quickly expressed, the Millennium Declaration advances sufficient utilize and treatment of water dependent on a few rules. The entire Millennium Declaration can be seen on the United Nations site. UN-Water has shaped itself a position in the United Nations by framing associations with other UN offices. It calls for "composed activity inside the UN framework and with different accomplices and partners – including associations from people in general and private divisions, common society, and work – as a major aspect of a worldwide, exhaustive effort".

Alongside the association, there have been numerous endeavors by the United Nations to bring issues to light of the current issue. The first of many is World Water Day. World Water Day, which is hung on March 22nd, is devoted to the subject "Adapting to water shortage". It featured the expanding importance of water shortage worldwide and the requirement for expanded combination and participation to guarantee feasible, productive and reasonable administration of rare water assets, both at global and neighborhood levels.

Another case of the United Nation's endeavor to bring issues to light is seen World Day to Combat Desertification in 2013. Its trademark encapsulates the message that "we are for the most part in charge of water and land protection and feasible utilize, and that there are answers for these genuine common asset challenges"(New York Times, 2013). Water might be the forthcoming battleground for political and monetary desires all through the world, the characterizing paradigm for financial and sustenance security, and the enthusiastic flashpoint for future survival and goals of advancement. Networks and countries confronting difficulties of shortage, the dangers of atmosphere fluctuation, and the weights of giving assets to blossoming populaces, may achieve a point of confinement in the worldwide storage, before different cutoff points are come to.

As people group are crashed into profound penury, clean water might be the last "line in the sand" of a Transboundry stream bank, a sandstone aquifer, or a relic lakebed – a line that, when crossed, produces struggle and war. It is irrefutable that spotless water shortage represents a risk to universal security (New York Times, 2013).

Theoretical framework:

Capitalist economy is gained by price mechanism. Here prices are determined by the interaction of demand and supply without the interference of any kind by the government or any other external forces (Samuelson & Nordhaus, 2010). Marxism is defined as, “A system of economic, social and political philosophy based on the ideas of social change in terms of economic factors.” This theory states that class stratifications that are outdated or work only for self-profitability will be outdated and replaced with more sustainable and community growth oriented structures. It states that as feudalism was replaced by capitalism, soon capitalisms will be replaced by socialism (Marx & Engels, 1848/2002).

It is one of the most established monetary frameworks and its starting point is at the season of mid-eighteenth century in England in the wake of Industrial Revolution. It is that framework, where methods for generation are possessed by private people, benefit is the principle rationale and there is no obstruction by the administration in the financial exercises of the economy. Consequently, it is known as free market economy. (Smith, 1776/2003). As per Karl Marx, in his 'Das Kapital', the capitalist on a normal takes twelve hours work from the laborer and pays him compensation equivalent to six hours work. “Capitalism is a free-market form or capitalistic economy may be characterized as an automatic self-regulating system motivated by self-interest of individuals and regulated by competitions” (Ferguson, as cited in EconomicDiscussion.net, 2023).

Under this system, consumer plays the most vital role. The entire production pattern is based on the desires, wishes and the demand of the consumer. The maximization of profit is the main motive of the producer. Profit guides the production in this type of economy. Under capitalistic system, government does not interfere in day-to-day economic activities. This means producers and consumers are free to take decisions. The capitalistic system is more democratic in comparison to other economic systems as there are more changes to chancel according to new environments of the economy. The inspiring force in this system is self-interest. It leads to hard work and to earn maximum income by satisfying their consumers (Smith, 1776/2003).

Analysis:

Rango is portrayed as the main hero of the movie as shown in the theme of his first act where he is pretending to save a damsel in distress by being the hero. He does this in his small terrarium at the back seat of the car that is owned by his masters. The scene is planned out where Rango plays all the parts by him. The theme of Rango is mostly different from other animations including Despicable Me and Mega mind, which focus on the theme park rides and are corporate amusements. Rango on the other hand shows comedy along with a grave issue of water hoarding, hegemony and coercion. The director, Gore Verbinski wanted this movie to not just sound but also feel like a western theme oriented movie. He made sure to bring out the typical sweat, dirt and gritty feeling of being in a desert and surviving under the scorching sun. It is visible from his direction that his team shared a similar vision and made the movie in such a manner as to clearly show what it was like to spend a typical day in a desert. The director designed the movie's theme such that the audience can breathe in all the dust and dirt from the movie itself. Although creating a western theme is a tough task, but Rango was cleverly made on this theme and that too in a successful manner.

Rango shows a cleat theme of the Wild West character with an active imagination. Gore Verbinski has used many other methods to communicate the theme to the audience. The imagery in the background was a clearly showing the images of the west. He also used abundant lights to

show the real aspect of the dazzling sun in a desert. The theme of the movie also included animals from the desert but they were given roles as the people living a city. This was done so that the audience could make a connection with them. Most of the characters were wearing cowboy boots, hats and moved around like people in the west (myassignmenthelp, analysis).

Rango: “What do you think happens then? Well, we'd all be drinking, and before you know it, there wouldn't be any water! And then where would we be? We'd be thirsty, real thirsty! Why, we'd turn on each other like a bunch of animals!” - (rottentomatoes ,quotes)

Rango is perhaps the most unique character in the movie. He is a terrarium chameleon with the zeal and imagination of an actor. He assumes situations and portrays himself as a hero in those situations. He pretends to be the savior of people. Although very weak at heart, he has the guts to act and pretend like a hero. He is a pure story maker. He would make up scenarios in his mind and bring them to reality. All the people of Dirt were extremely impressed by his stories of war and battle; these battles took place only in his imagination.

“All right, folks! Stand back. Clear the area. This is a crime scene now. Secure the perimeter, dust for prints, check for fibers, and scan for DNA! I want a urine sample from everyone and get me a latte. Don't mix up the two.” – Rango examining a crime scene

The mayor John is shown as a cunning businessman who has a futuristic approach. The mayor handles all the affairs around the town by inflicting fear and by using his power. He has a gang of thugs who coerce people into selling their properties on a low price which he buys as a sign of good will. The mayor's character in the movie intends to work with the people who are developing land and earning huge profits. But he however, has no intentions of sharing his profits with others. He believes in zero accountability for himself and portrays arrogance along with coercion in the movie.

“Water, Mr. Rango, water. Without it, there's nothing but dust and decay. But with water, there's life...That's the immutable law of the desert. You control the water, and you control everything. But I don't have to tell you that, being a true man of the West as you are.” (John, wikia)

Miss Beans has been portrayed as the most logically thinking citizen of Dirt. She has an intuitive nature and likes to investigate into matters rather than accepting the “apparent truth”. She is strong willed and shows a great level of concern for her town and her land. She is the land remaining citizen who will not come under the coercion of the thugs of the mayor to sell her land. She rather tries to find logical solutions to their water problem. She looks up to Rango when he becomes the Sheriff and also asks him to look into their water crisis. Rattlesnake Jake is shown as the ultimate coercer. He is strong and focused but works on the debt settlement with the mayor. He has been shown in the movie as a dangerous diamondback rattlesnake that comes to dirt only to take a soul with him. Throughout the movie, he has been characterized as cruel, vicious and destructive.

Beans: “Go to Hell!”

Rattlesnake Jake: “Where'd you think I came from?!”

Jake being extremely experienced in battle however uses fear and humiliation as a source to win most of his fights. He openly shamed Rango in front of all the people of Dirt by calling him out as a phony and kept everyone else in line as well by using only a stare.

“All these good folks here believe your little stories, don't they? Why, they think you're just a stone killer, don't they? It seems these folks trust you. They think you're going to save their little town. They think you're going to save their little souls. But we know better, don't we?” - Jake

while confronting Rango. Although he was cunning and manipulative, he had a sense of honor within in. When Rango saved Jake from the Mayor, he held up his honor and thanked Rango.

Rattlesnake Jake: One bullet...I tip my hat to you, one legend to another. (Jake, wikia)

The story starts out with a Pet Chameleon, voiced by Johnny Depp, who accidentally gets stranded on the roadside of the Mojave Desert after the car he was travelling in went through a bump and his terrarium fell from the owner's car. Rango being a dreamer, always wished to come out as the hero of every plot he has enacted in his tiny little stage. His fall was shown in a dramatic fashion that depicted what was about to come in the movie. When his terrarium fell, Rango was about to drink water from his cup. But as he fell, he was unable to reach out to the water and eventually when his terrarium broke, the last drop evaporated before his eyes due to the scorching heat of the dessert. After his encounter with the heat wave, he met a road-kill; an armadillo who was caught up by a car while he was searching for the mystical Spirit of the West. In an attempt to save him from the heat, he turns to look for water and instead narrowly escapes being eaten by hawk. Feeling hopeless and alone, the next day he meet Beans; a desert iguana, the daughter of a farmer; who is trying to solve the mystery of the disappearing water in the valley. She then takes him to Dirt. Dirt is a small, old west town that is populated with all kind of desert animals.

Rango's journey began by boosting about tackling the notorious gang with just one bullet. Rango did this to fit in and to make a name for him in a town that was full of tough animals. He decided to take on the role of a tough-guy drifter and choosing a name for his character that was off of a cactus juice. He landed himself with the name Rango. By doing so, he did make a name for himself and earned some friends. But least did he know, that he would land up against enemies as well. As Rango had put up quite an appearance of the tough- rugged lizard, this led the Mayor of Dirt to make Rango the New Sheriff. Dirt was in the middle of a strange and mysterious drought and no one seemed to understand why there was no water left in town. All the people were severely affected by it. Most of the people had left the town due to lack of water as most of them were farmers. Beans wanted Rango to investigate this issue as being the new sheriff.

The situation moved from being bad to being worse, when the little water that was left in the town's bank reserve got stolen. Stuck in living up to his persona and finding his true identity, Rango also had to solve this crime. As he said,

"No man can walk out on his own story"- The Spirit of the West

While investigating the water crime in the town, Rango had set out with an investigation team that included people from the town. They had joined together to help solve the water crisis once and for all. They all set out of town to find clues. Two major events had occurred that put Rango in a fix. When he had gone to look for clues with his search party, everything was pointing at the moles for stealing the water. But Rango did not by it because during his search, he had come upon a main switch for the water supply. There he saw foot prints in the sand which made him think that there might be something else happening under the hood. Since the moles and the town of Dirt had bad blood between each other, the people of Dirt had blamed the shortage and theft of water on the moles. As a result of which Rango had taken them into custody and put them behind bars. But the water theft still continued and it created chaos in the whole town.

The movie made a clear depiction that people in power abuse that power and use coercion to get what they want. The mayor was on quest to take possession of all the land in the town and for

this, he was buying out all of the land. He did this by hoarding water supply to the farmers, therefore reducing their agricultural output. By facing major loss in the output, the farmers were indirectly forced to sell their lands at low prices and move to other towns or survive with the little resources Dirt had.

Rango saw that the trees had circled around the main water pipe. He also saw that the other side of the desert was lush green, they had water sprinklers and everything seemed bright and happy. Near the main pipe he saw that the valve was purposely closed and he also saw that same sand as he saw on the boots of Mayor's team. He figured out that whole scheme and knew that he had to fulfill his destiny and help the people of Dirt. He went to the moles and asked for their help in making the snake run for his life. The moles decided to help him. They designed a plan to drive the snake away by making an eagle shape in the sky using the bats of the moles. Their plan was working well until the snake realized that they were in fact bats. He caught Rango and the mayor but miss beans and him in the water in the bank reserve where they would drown. Rango then realized that he had a bullet that he could use to break the glass. By this time, the mayor had made another enemy, the snake; by putting a trigger against him and calling him a pawn in achieving power in Dirt. When Rango was successful in breaking the glass, the snake caught hold of the mayor and took off by thanking Rango. Rango had successfully brought back life and water in the town of dirt and also had fulfilled his destiny as a hero.

"You know how they make it through each and every day? They believe." – Rango

"It does not matter what they call you. It's deeds that make the man." –Rango

Rango clearly lives up to this motto and makes himself a hero in his own eyes and for Dirt.

The movie Rango carried a lot of subliminal messages for its audience. These messages were the brain child of its director Gore Verbinski.

Conclusion:

Rango is a clear depiction of how people survive with low resources and how people in power impact the society at large. Rango also shows the issue of hydro-hegemony and capitalism that many countries are facing. Hydro-hegemony; mainly water lodging, is a common issue with many third world countries.

Rango is a movie that encapsulates many themes within the animation genre. This paper shows how the movie clearly depicts the issue of water crisis communities face real time. It also aims to analyze how people are affected by it and what modes of resort they use when the resources are at an all-time low.

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