



International Research Journal of Humanities, Language and Literature

ISSN: (2394-1642)

Impact Factor 6.959 Volume 9, Issue 3, March 2022

Association of Academic Researchers and Faculties (AARF)

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## THE DEBILITATING ASPECTS OF ECOFEMINISM THROUGH THE INDIAN LENS

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### **ABSTRACT**

Ecofeminism arose as a critical theory in the West. Francoise d' Eaubonne, a famous French critic and proponent of the ideology of western ecofeminism, invented the word Ecofeminism. The themes of environment and gender, and how they are connected, are addressed in Western philosophy on ideological terms. However, in India, the links between women and ecology can be articulated in practical terms since we have a long history of women's resistance against environmental degradation and exploitation. Women play an important role in the Chipko movement, the Narmada Bachaoandolan, and many other events. Women play a crucial role in these conflicts because their lives are inextricably linked to the natural world. Theorists and literary giants in India have delved into various aspects of the nature/woman relationship. In theory, there are two types of ecofeminism: spiritual and material. Spiritual ecofeminism focuses on reviving the image of nature as Goddess, while material ecofeminism emphasises the fact that women's material reality is such that when environment is hurt, their lives are also harmed. These ecofeminist theory strands aid in the formation of a framework for Indian ecofeminism. We can go deeper into the complexities of nature/women relationships in literature, particularly by female authors, which are sometimes neglected by theorists themselves. Gender, class, and race are discussed, city life or urbanity is depicted in both positive and bad light, and most significantly, these authors give us with an alternate vision of modernity that does not obliterate the "other." As we read these writings by Indian women authors, it becomes clear that Indian Ecofeminism cannot be defined in simple, monolithic terms. This is a realm of complex and diversified interactions in which man, woman, animals, plants, and all other living things are intertwined. One cannot exist without the other. When we begin to build an essentially Indian Ecofeminist theory, the concept of oneness comes to life. The importance of these female authors in creating the theory cannot be overstated. These texts, set in Indian villages from the 1940s to the 2000s, depict women protagonists of all backgrounds and their relationships with environment, as well as how the relationship has evolved through time. That's how we get a fairly comprehensive view of ecofeminism, which is primarily Indian.

**Keywords:** *Theory, fiction, women, third world and women*

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A Monthly Double-Blind Peer Reviewed Refereed Open Access International e-Journal - Included in the International Serial Directories.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Ecofeminism is a notion that has been around for a while but is still in its infancy. The Euro-American perspective has long dominated ecocritics and ecofeminism, and both areas have failed to effectively address the issue of ecofeminism. This requires both camps to acknowledge "the" double bind "of being a woman and being colonized at the same time." To be an ecofeminist, it would merge ecocriticism and ecofeminism into a single analytical approach and recognize that environmental exploitation and the oppression of women are intrinsically linked to ideas about class, caste, race, colonialism and neo- colonialism. Women as colonial people have been "repeatedly naturalised as objects of heritage to be held, maintained, or patronised rather than as subjects of their own land and legacies" in puritanical discourses about environment literature and critique. It is therefore critical to integrate feminism and

environmental issues together in order to confront imperialist processes and colonialist attitudes of social and environmental supremacy. Some postcolonial nations in Africa and South Asia, particularly India, have a history of environmental activism and movements long before ecofeminism was recognized as an academic field in the West.

Ecofeminism is a relatively recent critical thinking style that tries to investigate the different connections between nature and women. Both have traditionally been thought as being kind, nurturing, and giving beings. But there's another link: their common oppressive history. Both nature and women have been oppressed since the beginning of time because they are both considered as resources. They've been conquered, possessed, ruled, and exploited in many ways. Ecofeminists argue the explanation is a male patriarchal capitalist worldview that views nature and women as inferior "others." The dualisms of culture and nature, man and woman, emerge from here. Ecofeminism strives to understand not just the current dichotomies in our lives, but also where these dichotomies originated in history. Ecofeminists are confronted with questions during this inquiry, some of which are fundamental and to which they hope to provide solutions.

## 2. OBJECTIVES

In the ambit of the above discussion the following objectives have been designed:

- ☞ To investigate the ambiguous relationships between women and the environment in Indian fiction written by women.
- ☞ To analyze the aspects of the third world cultures that celebrates this ambivalent connection.

## 3. DISCUSSION

In India, women are leading environmental action and literature. The Chipko movement in India has become famous, and it is now considered as a highly effective example of grassroots ecology in the country. This movement has also been notable for the way it has involved women. Deforestation, logging, and mining are just some of the destructive activities that have led to the notion of tree hugging. MedhaPatkar, Mahasweta Fai, Arundhati Roy, and C.K. Januare among other women who have recently assumed leadership on environmental issues and activities. As the leader of Narmada BachaoAndolan, MedhaPatkar is fighting against the SardarSarovar Dam in Gujarat, India, on behalf of tribes, adivasis, farmers, environmentalists and human rights activists. In her activism and in hers books, feminist writer and activist Mahasweta Devi has devoted most of her time to improving the lives of tribal peoples and their environment in India.

Arundhati Roy, best known for her Booker Prize-winning novel *The God of Small Things*, uses her pen to support causes as diverse as the Narmada Bachao Andolan, nuclear tests in India, and separatists' quest for aazadi (independence) in Kashmir. C.K Janu, an adivasi woman who has been occupying the Muthanga jungles in North Kerala since 2003, is the most recent lady to come under the attention for fighting for an environmental cause

Given these advances in India, it's astonishing that most of the country's ecocritical works and activity aren't part of the environmental literary canon. In the ecocritical discipline, activists and women producing postcolonial Indian fiction in English have received little attention. The case for why women writers are critical to this effort must next be made.

A lot of Indian women's writers not only deal with concerns of female subjectivity in order to create an identity free of patriarchal society's constraints, but their work also has staying power because of the importance they place on societal issues. Women's writing in India, especially throughout the twentieth century, is coming to be recognised as a key medium of modernism and feminism. It's impossible to ignore the contributions of Indian-born women authors who write in English, such as Kiran Desai and Arundhati Roy, who have won prestigious awards like the Booker Prize and are well known in the

English-speaking literary community. Recently, Indian women writers have started to voice their worries about globalisation in India, including its effects on gender and family relations and the environment in its widest sense.

### **3.1 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WOMEN AND ENVIRONMENT**

Examining postcolonial ecofeminism in and around the works of Indian writers is an effort to explain why doing so is vital, as well as what these authors have to offer in terms of the ideology, theory and material reality of women in and around the world. ..

A wide range of ecofeminist novels are examined, from Kamala Markandya's *Nectar on a Sieve* to Anita Desai's *Fire on the Mountain*, Gita Mehta's *A River Sutra*, Arundhati Roy's *The God of Little Things* and Anuradha Roy's *The Atlas of Imposters*. . No other Indian woman The writer was mentioned in the field of ecofeminism except Arundhati Roy. The moral decay of this story is evident and reflected in the collapse of the fictional village of Ayemenem, which begins with Roy.

Both the Meenachal River's pollution and the history of environmental degradation in Kerala may be seen through the prism of Ammu's and Velutha's stories. Instead of enforcing love rules and social customs, Baby Kochamma does it with a zealous zeal, while Ammu remains eternally optimistic for a better future, the last word in the storey being tomorrow. When Baby Kochamma learns about the inter- caste romance, it upsets him because of his past experiences with love and loss. Even though she claims to be an ornamental gardener, her garden quickly falls into disorder as she starts watching TV instead of caring for it herself. This is the setting for the sibling incest, and it serves as a terrifying picture of the horrific throughout Roy's storey.

For a long time, before Mohan Roy's work became a phenomenon, women and the environment were faced by feminist writers like Kamala Markandya and Anita Desai. Although they describe the private and personal lives of women, these authors make political judgments about social issues and Indian culture as a whole.

More modern works such as Abdulali's *La loca di Jogare*, *A River Sutra* by Mehta, *An Atlas of Impossible Longing* by Anuradha Roy and *Monkey-Man* by Usha K.R investigate the link between women and urbanization, development and the metropolis. The possibilities of women in the city

mimic the rhetoric of globalization, which offers the same opportunities for all. As such, they violate the nature / culture divide.

The writings of Indian women on the links between women and the environment add to the body of ideas on development and ecofeminism. Cultural ecofeminism and Vandana Shiva's ideas, in particular, question the idea that women and the environment are simple and homogeneous groups. Women and the environment are described in a positive and negative way in this literature. In India or in the Third World generally, it is not valid to accept the connection between woman and nature without asking questions. Women's increased vulnerability to environmental degradation does not mean that women "naturally" have a good view of the environment, say these authors.

### 3.2 THE THIRD WORLD CULTURES

When we discuss connectivity in India, we must also consider another type of ecofeminism, one that is more material than spiritual. Many say that spiritual ecofeminism runs the risk of being essentialist; rather than destroying current power structures, it may reaffirm traditional gender roles and equations. In the same essay, VijayaRettakudiNagarajan criticises Shiva's notion of the sacred connection between nature and women. Shiva's ideals of "ecological virtueness," which Indian women naturally have as they water their tulsi plants every day, are criticised by her. How observing a ritual might make one conscious of and active towards ecological conservation is also left unanswered in Shiva's thesis. BinaAgarwal's 'Feminist Environmentalism' takes a similar approach. She is also an outspoken supporter of material

ecofeminism and a critic of spiritual ecofeminism. She is interested in the social standing of women in relation to nature. She claims that, as marginalised entities, they have a common ground, but it is their material reality, not a spiritual thread, that bonds them together. And because this relationship is variable, it is dependent on materiality, material creation, and distribution. And it would be an exaggeration to argue that this connection is always favourable.

There's also the west's systematic exploitation of the third world in order to get control of its market. And these commercial techniques affect people's lives, particularly women's and children's. These mothers and children's lives are inextricably linked to the land. The economy and market strategies are influenced by the industries. We need to grasp how the new economy operates in order to profit from the market, and how poor villagers and farmers are deprived of better livelihoods as a result of these systems. "Global markets allow the interior of the Third World to produce for the market and enter the cash economy," writes ChhayaDatar in her book *Ecofeminism Revisited*. These folks, on the other hand, lack negotiating power and consequently earn less. The poor are opposed against the rich in terms of commerce (i.e., the price at which impoverished countries sell to buy from the rich). To set pricing, wealthy countries create a "buyers' market." Even though poor people make up the bulk of the population, they do not have complete control over their products.

The Third World's production has been shaped to meet the demands of affluent countries. It offers modern conveniences while robbing them of their independence. Development breaks down and disintegrates while promising to rebuild - a hollow promise that is never achieved in the Third World." All of these theoretical methods demonstrate that ecofeminism is a growing critical thinking that we must adapt in order to perceive and grasp all of the subtle power politics that are being played out all around us. When we discuss ecofeminism in Third World nations like India, a quite different picture emerges. India is a land of contrasts, including cultural, economic, religious, and propaganda differences. As a result, measuring or defining Indian Ecofeminism from a set theoretical point of view

that speaks of the Third World in general becomes challenging. We have a tendency to generalise and lump India into the category of Ecofeminism in the Third World. When it comes to Ecofeminism in the Third World, we often overlook the fact that India might provide a completely distinct picture. Ecofeminism arose in the West as a theoretical framework. These theoretical perspectives help us understand what ecofeminism is and how it fits into the third world's setting. However, having a broad understanding of how women interact with nature is insufficient. This is a delicate relationship, and Indian women authors explore its many aspects.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

In the post-independence era, Indian women writers have dealt with man's relationship with nature, both in theory and fiction. These authors have a unique perspective on things. In their works, they have been able to remark on a clear eco-consciousness. Human lives are seen as a part of a wider nature by this consciousness, which recognises that when this nature is exploited, human lives are affected. When growing industrialism was viewed as a positive transformation in the lives of poor Indians, these writers revealed the negative repercussions of industrialism, as well as development efforts in free India. This eco-consciousness of writers from the 1940s and 2000s is unique to India and cannot be compared to other kinds of eco-critical writing. This eco-consciousness, on the other hand, is essentially Indian and can be studied in terms of the newly formed theories of eco-criticism and ecofeminism. The goal is to determine how the works of these Indian women writers might be classified as ecofeminist in certain ways, as the theory suggests, while also departing from many features of ecofeminism. And it is through this process of identifying similarities and differences that one can observe how Indian women writers have created a distinct style of eco-critical writing that is unmistakably Indian.

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