

The Voice of Ecofeminism in Mistress

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Abstract

The term Ecofeminism was coined in the seventies by a French writer Francoise d' Eaubonne. This idea is common with socialist. It helps in saving the world and shapes the female identity and also has a tendency to focus on an essentialized view of women. It is a branch of Feminism gives the association between Women and Nature is seen as a source of positive strength. Women generally are given an inferior status in the society and they are equated with nature. Ecofeminism gives the clear cut idea how the patriarchal society treats both women and nature.

In 1980 Ecofeminism branch out into two as Radical Ecofeminism and Cultural Ecofeminism. Radical Ecofeminism gave a view of how the society tries to degrade both Women and Nature for low labour and resources. Cultural Ecofeminists encourage the connection between Women and Nature. They believed that it makes Women to be more sensitive. "...in feminist criticism in the 1970s the major effort went into exposing what might be called the mechanisms of patriarchy, that is, the cultural 'mind-set' in men and women which perpetuated sexual inequality. (TBT-117)"

Anitha Nair was born at Mundakottakurissi, near shoranur in Kerala. She studied in Chennai and graduated herself in English Literature. Anitha Nair's *Mistress* is chosen for this paper, views the desire in female psyche. It's a post-colonial novel with feminist concern. Post-colonial literature is the literature by people from formerly colonized. The novel is set on the bank of river Nila, the picturesque Kerala, like the river Nila the plot is a journey to self-realisation. Most of the things in the novel revolve like the river Nila, has enough water which symbolizes the depth of the life of the women characters of this Novel. Nair is one of Indian's popular female writers. She is a novelist, poet, travel writer, essayist, and short fiction writer. Anitha is a critically acclaimed author of her novels, *The Better Man*, *ladies Coupe*, *Mistress*, etc., she is a delicate writer with a great sense of characterisation.

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Women and Nature for lowlabour and resources. Cultural Ecofeminists encourage the connection between Women and Nature. They believed that it makes Women to be more sensitive. "...in feminist criticism in the 1970s the major effort went into exposing what might be called the mechanisms of patriarchy, that is, the cultural 'mind-set' in men and women which perpetuated sexual inequality. (TBT-117)"

In Ancient India, man-women relationship has always been that they have equal rights and responsibility towards society in which they are living. Women were treated with great respect and veneration both by men and women. It was only in the later stages that man has started asserting his supremacy over the female as one of his possession along with land, building, cattle etc. Women's identity is behind the mask of sacrifice and dependency. These voices are no better than the voices of the dumb, not audible to the world. "Ecocriticism, as it now exists in the USA, takes its literary bearings from three major nineteenth century American writers whose work. Celebrates nature, the life force. (TBT-240)"

Ecocriticism concerning some of the crucial matter of the relationship between culture and nature. It is the study of literature and environment from an interdisciplinary point of view, in which literature treats nature. Ecofeminism deals with women and nature were both are bound with culture. It is an activist and academic movement that see the critical connections between the domination of nature and the exploitation of women.

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Anitha Nair binds her works with a famous and manifesting dance of Kerala, Kathakali. Kathakali is a highly stylized classical Indian dance-drama originated in State of Kerala, India in 17th century, noted for the attractive make-up and elaborates costumes. Komen is the prime mover, is a Kathakali artist of international repute. Most of the women characters reflect around him. His journey in dance see him both rise and fall in love and life. The different cases of interplay between the characters are expressed through Navarasas- *Sringaaram*(Love), *Haasyam*(Contempt), *Karunam*(Sorrow), *Raudram*(Fury), *Veeram*(Valour), *Bhayaanakkam*(Fear), *Beebhalsam*(Disgust), *Adbhutam*(Wonder), *Shaantam*(Detachment). The nine phases of human emotions, it is, the nine ways of face expressions of human heart. Chris steps into Kerala, meets Radha, her husband Shyam and her uncle Koman who lives by the river Nila. Christopher Stewart joins them as guest with an assignment, is to chronicle the live of the

international reputed dancer Koman, accommodating himself near Nila in a riverside resort run by Shyam.

In the first part of the novel we come across a teenage Arab girl named Saadiya, Koman's mother, daughter of Haji Najib Masood Ahmed, he the chief of the town and most respected man. Her heart longs to catch the sight of the nature surrounded in and around her. She belongs to an orthodox family, where gentle sex is not allowed to see any strangers other than their father, brother and husband.

So Saadiya, whose freedom until then had encompassed just twenty feet by thirty feet, stepped into the common alley. Her heart beat fast and she felt her mouth godry, ... Saadiya ran her tongue over her suddenly dry lips and looked skyward to feel the sea breeze on her uplifted face. The breeze caressed her cheeks, sending a clat of pleasure down her spine. Slowly she lowered her face and as she did so, her eyes encountered those of a young man's. (M-102)

She is not a sort of ordinary women born here like her sister and other ladies, "live and die hidden by the walls?" once her father raised the hot iron rod and placed it a second time by the line of burnt flesh.

There is a singing in my head that says, there is so much to see, so much to know. It isn't fair that you men get to go wherever you want, see and do whatever you like, and I am expected to be content with this patch of blue and this maze of alleys. But Saadiya would never speak her thoughts. She was too much in awe of her father, her venerable Vaapa. (M-99)

Saadiya was quit interested in upbringing her religious rituals, Sethu her Hindu husband does not allow such things to be performed on their tender new born son Koman. In an angry mood he asks her to leave their son and go to her religious parents. When he comes home from work, he was shocked to see only his son and Saadiya takes her life off by drowning herself in the sea. Saadiya who leaves her family for Sethu cannot leave her religion, through this it states that mind and the body of a human being are entirely different. "I saadiya, good girl, descendant of the Sahabbakal, descendant of the incomparable Malik, descendent of the leader of Kahirs, with the purest of Arab blood in my veins, lie here felled by the weight of a glance. (M-129)"

Sethu, remarries Devayani a good enough wife, loving and caring, before introducing Koman his son by Saadiya to her, his second wife gave birth to two boys Mani and Babu, Devayani was a good women to accept Koman because she knows that protesting against her husband is null and void. Koman's emotional story filled with sorrow, later dominates everyone's history.

So then I knew that my father hadn't ever mentioned that I existed. My stepmother was a good woman. Or perhaps she knew it was futile to protest and so accepted my presence without any recriminations. One day I was a near orphan. The next day I was a boy with a family. Later I heard

her tell ParuKutty, the old lady of the house whose face took its rosy hue from her nose ring, 'He used to be married. She died. (M-263)

Angela Christopher's mother, she is a student learning Kathakali under Koman. She is in Kerala to do her dissertation work. Angela's parentage is both German and Spanish. She was fallen in love with Koman who was a mixture of generous and romantic by nature. His miscellaneous spirit brought her close to him, she witness all his performance. Later they started living in live in relationship, as husband and wife in Koman's little house near the river Nila the home stood for their passion.

I was worried about her. And I worried that she was the way she was because of me. After she and I began to live together, I had to draw very clear lines between our personal and professional lives... 'I suggest that we ask Sundaran or one of the others to take you into their class.' But she refused. 'It won't be the same.' She had given up kathakali for me. What more could I ask of her?(M-372)

Angela wants Koman to move, the West to get recognition all over the world,they moved to London. There Koman was totally dependent on Angela both emotionally and financially."She left money around so I could buy cigarettes without asking her for a hand out. She brought airmail forms and put them on the table so I could write home to my family".(M-387). Due to this he decides to return India to his soul Kathakali.

Radha's husband Shyam,is in love with her.Shyam had foolish dreams since his childhood, he wanted to possess her at any cost. He married her even though she had pre-marital relationship with a married man. Shyam views nature and women as resource for the benefit of man. He sees Radha as a passive resource, a decorative movable assets with her other immovable assets.Shyma's economically deprived childhood made him determined to make this decision. He consider her pre-marital affairs as an innocent relationship. Radha thinks that Shyam seems to rule her, he won't let her breathe freely. She has not let Shyam to penetrate her soul in nearly six years of their marriage life. She has no love left for him,Radha had never loved him.

Shyam's call leaves me feeling angrier than ever. I cannot take this any longer, I think I cannot bear to be this insufferable man's wife.

I don't care, I say,my marriage is dead. And Shyam means nothing to me'. 'I don't think you mean that. You do, in your own way, care for Shyam. Are you saying that eight years of marriage mean nothing to you? (M-206-207).

Radha is unconsciously drawn by the personality of Christopher Steward. She initially sees her love with Chris is above earthly wishes. She always compares her love with nature, the river bed, clear blue sky and the distant hills.

My love rose above the sludge of conventional adultery. My love was born in a perfumed garden where fireflies and stars stood vigil. My love lived in a room where curtain bellowed and the breeze blew. My love

grew amidst music and words, and a thousand buds. How could such a love be dismissed as squalid or vile, I told myself.(M-398).

Women always have a good relationship with the environment. Nair explains how a male is attracted by a female, Radha compares Chris with nature with whom she is more close to him other than Shyam. She ever felt that she was committing a crime.

I look at him with every movement, the thought hinges itself into my mind. What an attractive man. It isn't his hair is the colour of rosewood-deepbrown with hints of red- or that his eyes are as green as the enclosed pond at the resort. It isn't the pale gold of his skin, either. It is the way he's combed his hair back from his forehead: a sweep of order that gives up midway and tumbles into disorderly curls.it is the strength of his... (M-8-9).

Radha walked out from Chris because later she come to know he didn't tell her that he came to Kerala to identity his father she was unhappy because Radha reveal all her family secrets to Chris,So she chooses to give up both men Shyam and Chris.Radha decides to think of what she wants to do with her life. She decides to become Mistress of her own self.The main character in the novel Saadiya, Radha and Angela comes out of their shell and satisfies their desire. The main theme of Mistress as anecofeminist work, the modern Radha, innocent Saadiya and researcher and Angelaare speaking loudest in their ultimate choices they made. They assert their individuality and also try to show the awareness of their responsibility. The author uses an artistic style of story-telling which combines both narrative and Kathakali dance. The characters in the novel have a passion in life which decides the course of their life, and hence it becomes a demanding mistress.

The navarasas play a major role to establish the narrative, women in India had a freer and more dignified position than in Greece or Rome. Nowadays, women have enough courage to exhibit their individuality at various levels. Though they possess the voice of the dumb,they have made it audible in recent years and started shaking the convention of dependency. Nair's women protagonists show courage.

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