Conceptualisation of Women - Environment Relationship in Ecofeminism: An Analysis

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Abstract

Environment protection gain priority as living organism cannot sustain without the proper protection of environment including nature and its resources. The problem of environment degradation is global which demands international efforts and cooperation to address them. Ecofeminism. Many studies have established the closely bounded and intimate relation between women and nature that led to the emergence of the theory Ecofeminism. Ecofeminism is a field bridging ecological ethics and feminism that seeks to explore the conceptual connections between environmental degradation and sexist oppression. Eco-feminists argue that women are prominent actors and contributors to environmental rehabilitation and conservation.

The theory of Ecofeminism upholds that the oppression of women and the domination of nature are interconnected phenomenon. Eco-feminists analyse the issues like racism, class, colonisation, heterosexism and other forms of domination on/oppression against women in relation to the human highhandedness on environment/ecology. They also argue that women are more affected by any type of natural disaster which in turn makes them conscious of the need for environment protection. The study on various environmental movements suggests that most of the participants in such movements are women as environmental degradation itself is the very question of lives of women.

KEYWORDS : Ecofeminism, women, environment, patriarchy, sexism, development

Introduction

The relation between human and nature led to the emergence of many theories such as theory of Deep Ecology, Ecotheology and Ecofeminism. The intimate relation between women and nature paved the way to the emergence of theory of Ecofeminism which assert that women and environment are closely bounded. The assertion of the relation between women and earth are highlighted in the terms like Mother Earth, and Earth Goddess (Yalan, 2007). Ecofeminism emerged in West as a product of peace, feminist and ecology movements of late 1970's and early 1980s (Rao, 2012). The word Ecofeminism is first used by Francois d'Eaubonne in her book *Le Feminisme ou la Mort? (*feminism or death?) published in 1974. For d'Eaubonne the term Ecofeminism[i] was meant to describe' how the human race could be saved by women initiating an ecological revolution, as a way to counter the oppression of women that is one and the same as the oppression and destruction of nature' (Tollefsen, 2011).

Ever since the emergence, Ecofeminism has influenced political activism as well as theoretical works in philosophy, literature and language and even science and technology. It also spread to variety of cultural work such as poetry, art, essays or novels (Alenso, 2013). Ecofeminism developed and popularised by various thinkers

like Karren J. Warren, Val Plumwood, Ynestra King, Ariel Salleh, Susan Griffin, Carolyn Merchant and Vandana Shiva[ii]. The important works that popularised Ecofeminism are *Women and Nature* (Susan Griffin, 1978), *Gyn/Ecology* (Mary Daly, 1978), *The Death of Nature* (Carolyn Merchant, 1980*) Ecofeminism* (Mies & Shiva 1993), *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* (Val Plumwood 1993) and *Ecofeminist Philosophy: A Western Perspective on What It Is and Why It Matters* (Karen J. Warren 2000). According to Karren J. Warren (1994) Ecofeminism is a field bridging ecological ethics[iii] and feminism that seeks to explore the conceptual connections between environmental degradation and sexist oppression. This paper is discussing the Ecofeminist theory – the development of Ecofeminist thought, the tenets of Ecofeminism and types of Ecofeminism. It also briefly analyse the Ecofeminist thinking in India.

Ecofeminism: Conceptualising Women-Environment interrelations

Ecofeminism derive from philosophy of feminism grounded in women's affinity with the forces of nature, as opposed to men's urge to control and manipulate nature (UNRISD, 1994). The pre patriarchal culture in the Mediterranean and old European world gave importance to fertile Goddesses and other nature symbols as feminine and thus reassert the woman nature relationship. Enlightenment and Industrial Revolution brought instrumental rationality which replaced the organic character of human-nature relations with mechanistic character. This resulted in the domination of male over female and the man over nature. Consequently, Earth Goddess was replaced by Sky God which was symbol of patriarchy especially in the middle ages (Merchant, 1980).

The Ecofeminist movement emerged in the form of activism in different areas of the world through the active involvement of women in demonstrations against the Three Mile Island accident (issue of nuclear reactor in U.S.A), the Love Canal disaster (issue of dumping hazardous waste) and Chipko movement (protesting against massive deforestation in India) (Gates, 1998 as cited in Alonso, 2013). However, Ecofeminism as an academic discourse did not develop until the mid 1980s (Salleh 1984, Plumwood 1986 & Warren, 1987). The Ecofeminist theory became popular during 1980s in the mainstream academic debates as part of the development of new insights in social theory such as poststructural and feminist debates. Ecofeminists engaged in many campaigns (protests, boycotts etc.) to bring attention to the inter connection of issues of justice, women and environment.

Ecofeminism covers many concepts and different Ecofeminist writers' emphasis different issues under the term Ecofeminism. For example, when Ynestra King (1983) considers Ecofeminism as part of political theory and practice, Starhawk and Charlene Spretnak give a central place to earth-centred spirituality and goddess reverences to the concept of Ecofeminism (Spretnak 1990; Starhawk 1990). As Greta Gaard (1997) opines, Ecofeminist theory has exploring the connections among many issues: environmental degradation, economics, electoral politics[iv], animal liberation, reproductive politics, biotechnology[v], spirituality, holistic health practices, sustainable agriculture, and racism[vi].

Ecofeminism upholds that the oppression of women and the domination of nature are interconnected phenomenon. The conceptual binaries and ideological hierarchies as higher-ranking categories and lower-ranking categories (e.g. man over woman, culture over nature, white over black and heterosexism over queer[vii]) are the tools

used to reaffirm oppression and exploitation by Ecofeminists (Fed, 2014). According to Plumwood (1993), the force behind all dualisms is the opposition between reason and nature, where reason is seen as masculine and nature as feminine. Ecofeminism concerns with the issues like class exploitation, racism, market exploitation, which in turn result in environmental degradation and exploitation of unprivileged groups. Issues of pollution, deforestation, toxic waste dumps, agricultural development and sustainability, animal rights and nuclear weapon are coming under discussions within the umbrella term of eco feminism, along with classism, racism, sexism and specisim[viii] (Warren, 1996). They also demand a dignified position for women and environmental justice.

According to Warren, (1994) all forms of domination including domination over women and nature, dominations of people of colour, ethnic minorities, children and animals are to be examined to understand how all of them are interconnected and interrelated. Therefore, ecological feminism/Ecofeminism functions as an umbrella term[ix] that covers not only the domination over nature and women but all forms of oppressive relations that still exist in the human world as well as the human nature relations (Alonso, 2013). In the due course, Ecofeminism has been influenced by academic and political movements, postcolonial movements, peace movements and science and technology, though it started as an intersection between ecology and feminism (Cuomo, 1998 as cited in Alonso, 2013).

According to Cullinan (2008), the traditional Western system deeply rooted in the belief that humans are separate from and superior to natural world. The whole reason for overexploitation of environment is based on these patriarchal ideas. Nature is often feminized and sexualized as the "virgin forest," "the rape of the earth," or "penetrating" the wilderness (Griffin 1978; Merchant 1980). Thus, for Ecofeminists, degradation of environment and the oppression of women are interrelated and needs to be deconstructed for better human-nature relations on the one hand and better gender relations on the other.

Both men and women are the victims of environment degradation and both are participating in environment protection movements as well. However, many studies highlight that women are more active in environment protection as they are more close to nature and directly affected by environmental degradation (Rao, 2012). Gaard & Murphy (1998) deny the concept that "Ecofeminism is the province of women alone". According to the critical approach, Ecofeminism could no longer be identified with women only. Rather, Ecofeminists are the community of people who participates in critical Ecofeminist analyses of the global environmental situation (Mies and Shiva, 1993; Merchant, 1980; 1990; 1996).

It is a fact that women are the prime victims of exploitation during natural disaster (Raymond et al., 1994). For example, the studies (Fothergill, 2004; Fisher, 2005) on after-effects of Indian Ocean Tsunami in 2004 reveal the abuse of women and girls after the disaster even in the rehabilitation camps. Fothergill (2004) states that during and post natural disasters, mothering and caretaking is also become much more difficult for women who care for disabled family members. In most of the societies every day responsibilities of parenting and caring for dependants are the duties of women (Enarson & Scanlon, 1999). In the time of disaster and evacuation, the responsibilities of women are increasing. At the time of disasters mothering become

difficult as condition are unsafe and small children need more care in such a situation. The consequences of disaster such as degradation of water quality, water scarcity, food, shelter, sanitation problems also adversely affects the health condition of women and children (Halvorson, 2004). In short, women are more affected by the disaster which in turn makes women conscious of the need for environment protection effort by them and for the better existence of nature.

Warren (1996) bear the idea that anything harms the nature will harm women as they are very much linked to nature than men. This strong connection compels women for prominent protectors of environment. As Hamiton (1990) observed women play primary role in environment protection activities because of the direct effect of environment problems on their lives. Similarly, women as mothers are more conscious about environment protection and better environment for their children. As mothers these women have the obligation to feed, clothe, house and nurture their families and communities (Kaplan, 2001).

Women are the caretakers of environment and western science and development model victimized women and environment Vandana Shiva (1988). Ecofeminists emphasised that protection of ecology is a feminist issue. The connections between the oppression of women and the oppression of nature are highlighted in order to understand "why the environment is a feminist issue", as well as "why feminist issues can be addressed in terms of environmental concerns" (Gaard, 1993).

Ecofeminism also analyses how the problems of racism, class, colonisation, heterosexism and other oppression interconnect women oppression and environmental degradation. As Ellen O'Loughlin explains, "because most women experience [oppression] in more than one way that is, through the dynamics of racism, classism, homosexism, and ageism, Ecofeminism, in order to fight the oppression of women and nature, must look at more than just the ways in which sexism is related to naturism" (1993: 148).

Most Ecofeminists point to colonisation and subsequent subjugation of the "third world" people as the reason for change in values regarding nature and women (Shoba, 2013). Ecofeminist theories also draw a link between how the problem of development affects gender and environment (Schultz et al., 2001). The privatisation of forests and rivers and construction of big dams make the lives of village women more difficult. Vandana Shiva (1988) argues that the western model of development based on modern science technology and instrumental rationality are patriarchal and therefore it affects women's right in environment. With the new project of 'development', the oldest forms of oppression, gender subordination and patriarchy have taken on new and more violent forms of oppression (Kaur, 2012) as women and children are affected by the mal development.

Many studies (Ress, 1992; Akwa, 2009; Moser, 1991) affirm that women are prominent actors and contributors to environmental rehabilitation and conservation. Women through their role as farmers and collectors of water and fire-woods have a close connection with their local environment. Thus women have served as agriculturists, water resource conservationists and preserver of traditional knowledge/scientists (Akwa, 2009). The studies of UNISDR (2007) on Tsunami recovery services of Srilankan women, gender mainstreaming in Tsunami affected

areas of India, post earthquake relief work in Maharashtra and Indonesia, and construction of Hurricane resistant houses in Jamaica unravels the active role of women in disaster management and conservation of environment. In short, the interconnection of women and nature and active participation of women in disaster management and reconstruction provide the strong base for Ecofeminist theory.

The whole arguments of Ecofeminist reach to the point that women and environment are closely related and degradation of environment is same as oppression of women as well as there exist connections between environmental degradation and sexist oppression. It supports and respect women's effort to conserve environment. Another important aspect of Ecofeminism is that it is based on the idea that important knowledge about ecology and women must be deconstructed from the old understanding of male domination. There is a need to understand the various ways women have actively participated in environmental protection and management with a view to integrate them into environment management programme. Thus the argument that woman is more actively participating in environment protection find meaning.

Tenets of Ecofeminism

Ecofeminism hold an eco centrist position that all human must understand their interdependence on earth (Berg, 2009). It criticises the position that men/human beings are superior to nature and everything in nature is for them. Anthropocentrism[x] was a major reason for the degradation of nature that resulted in natural calamities and extinction of many species. Ecofeminsm makes some linkages between human domination over environment and man domination over women (through patriarchy). Warren relates environmental degradation and sexist oppression to find out the conceptual connection between ecology and feminism. The whole idea of women oppression revolves around western patriarchy[xi] (Therbon, 2004; Walby, 1990; Omvedt, 1990). The patriarchal binary places women/nature in same category against men/culture. In other words, pollution of planet and oppression of women are caused by the same set of tradition (Mattes, 1990).

Under Ecofeminism, all forms of oppression illuminating that the oppression of nature and of women are related. This leads to a multi-layered analysis of environmental exploitation in the context of many kinds of discrimination (Mies & Shiva, 1993). To address this, one needs to break the patriarchal nature of the system by withdrawing power and energy from patriarchy (Gaard, 1993). In short, Ecofeminism wants to reconstruct and reconceptualise the patriarchal version of treatment of women and nature as inferior, and demand equal treatment of men/women and culture/nature.

Ecofeminism is an inclusive philosophy. It includes issues of women in different background and experience to enable women to work together across race, class and national lines (Berg, 2009). One of the most important premises of Ecofeminism is that all forms of domination are interconnected, and not only those of women and of nature, but all the groups traditionally labelled as the other like dominations of people of colour, ethnic minorities, children and animals (Warren, 2000). Ecofeminists represent the unrepresented i. e, women, nature, people of third world and nonhumans[xii]. According to Ecofeminists, environmental degradation affects everyone, but more vulnerable is the voiceless. So it is important to include those unrepresented in environmental decision making.

Ecofeminism gives importance to local values. Ecofeminists supports the work of community activists and grassroots movements and changes advocated by such groups in environment protection along with global efforts (Berg, 2009). The local indigenous knowledge can contribute best solutions for environmental problems and the integration of such knowledge with scientific research, policy-making, and planning can reduce the natural calamities in concerned regions (Hiwasaki etal., 2014). Thus, Ecofeminists concentrates more on the unrepresented sections' preference for environmental decision making as they know much about the environment through acquired indigenous knowledge. The local traditional knowledge acquired by women and indigenous people in the areas of agriculture, environmental resource management, and health is often different from that held by men in the same areas. By integrating this gender-specific knowledge with modern science and technology supports more sustainable development (IDRC, 1995).

Ecofeminism challenges the status quo and personal and military violence. The existing industrial and agricultural production processes, are being challenged by the movement (Berg, 2009). They were against the methods which involve the routine excessive packaging and waste, pollution of environment and workplace, and the routine use of toxic substances (Ashworth, 1995). They are also developing a critique of market expansion, technology and science which doesn't consider the need of environment protection and women. They are against violence and human right abuses. Thus they stress on the necessity of environment friendly development. According to Ynestra King (1983): "Ecofeminism is about connectedness and wholeness of theory and practice (it sees) the devastation of the earth and her beings by the corporate warriors, and the threat of nuclear annihilation by the military warriors as feminist concerns. Ecofeminist practices creatively resist institutionalized authority and its tendencies toward violence, while envisioning more connected, fluid, and embodied modes of being" (as cited in Berg, 2009).

Bina Agarwal (1997) describes four main overlying precepts in Ecofeminism. The first principle is that Ecofeminists find out the commonalities between gender oppression and environmental degradation mainly caused by male and western dominance. Second principle states that men are more related to culture and that women are related to environment. Women are more related to nature as women and nature placed in inferior position in conceptual binaries. Thirdly, the oppression of women and the oppression of nature have occurred simultaneously and thus women have a responsibility to cease male domination over both. Fourthly, Ecofeminism seeks to combine feminism and ecological thought, as they both work towards egalitarian, non-hierarchical structures (as cited in Manion, 2002). Thus the whole theory of Ecofeminism revolves around the ideas of women nature interconnection which based on the domination of nature and exploitation of women and wants to deconstruct western patriarchal conceptual binaries.

Classification of Ecofeminism
Ecofeminist scholar Carolyn Merchant (1995) has classified Ecofeminist theory into liberal, radical and socialist Ecofeminism. There are also social/ cultural/ spiritual Ecofeminism apart from this classification.

Liberal Ecofeminism: As stated by Merchant (1995) liberal Ecofeminism views environmental problems are a result of the rapid exploitation of natural resources

accompanied by the lack of regulation of pesticides and other environmental pollutants and proper representation of women is needed in environmental legislation formation. With equal educational opportunities, women can become scientists, natural resource conservators, lawyers, and so on, and can contribute in improvement of environment, conservation of natural resources and better quality of life. Liberal Ecofeminists fail to address environment and relation of women of different class, culture, race and ethnicity and especially non-white women.

Socialist Ecofeminism: It considers women as a class and colonisation as well as capitalism is the reason for environmental and women degradation (Shiva, 1988). For Merchant socialist Ecofeminism sees environmental problems as 'rooted in the rise of capitalist patriarchy and the ideology that the earth and nature can be exploited for human progress through technology' Nature is therefore both the necessary basis of human life and the result of historical and social forces. It is both a `natural' and a social construct. The same is true for gender. It is created both by biology and social practices. Women's roles in production, reproduction, and ecology can become the starting point for a socialist Ecofeminist analysis (Merchant, 1992).

In socialist Ecofeminism, physical world (nature) and human world are viewed as being historically and socially constructed and therefore connections and interactions between humans, nature, men and women 'must be grounded in an understanding of power not only in the personal but also in the political sphere" (Merchant, 1990). The critique is that, prescriptions by socialist Ecofeminism are considered unrealistic in the back ground of the changes indicated by socialist-feminists seem too challenging for ordinary citizens in contemporary world and therefore most people do not want to radically change their lifestyles, as suggested by socialist-feminists. Socialist-feminists respond that through wholesale changes might seem difficult, everyone can do something, even if it seems small (Tong, 1998).

Social Ecofeminism. Social Ecofeminism rooted in history going back to the time of the Greeks to the inferiorisation of both women and nature (Plumwood (1992). It concentrates on the fact that the historical socialisation of women and nature are subjugated. Social Ecofeminism advocates the liberation of women through overturning economic and social hierarchies that turn all aspects of life into a market society that today even 'invades the womb' (Merchant, 1992). Although cultural feminism has developed more deeply into the woman-nature connection, social and socialist Ecofeminism have the potential for a more thorough critique of domination and for a liberating social justice (Merchant, 1992).

Thus Social and Socialist Ecofeminist see natural world and human world as socially constructed. Ecological feminism is a branch of social Ecofeminism that allows more space for diversity of race, gender and class within its discourse (Manion, 2002). According to Tong (1998) social Ecofeminists, by de-emphasizing the connections between women and the earth, dilute the initial power of Ecofeminism as a movement to reclaim the earth as an extension of the biology of women. Feminine-characteristics do have values separate from traditionally-masculine-characteristics. This should be used to make the world a more peaceful, nurturing place instead of being viewed as limiting.

Cultural/Radical Ecofeminism: Cultural/Radical Ecofeminist 'naturalise' woman's role with nature (Twine, 2001). They maintain that, because of historical constructs,

men were placed in a position of authority over women and the environment (Mies & Shiva, 1993). The radical Ecofeminist emphasise the relation between environmental degradation and subjugation of women which emerged with the Enlightenment and Industrial Revolution (Merchant 1992). As Warren (2001) states women's capabilities to care for nature as the expression of empowerment and liberation is expressed through cultural Ecofeminism, which reclaims women-nature connections. The cultural/radical Ecofeminists are more closely engaged with environmental issues (Twine, 2001).

Radical Ecofeminists believe that women's oppression is rooted in women's reproductive roles and the sex/gender system. They want to eradicate the patriarchal dualism and this can be done through embracing that which has been devalued (Berman, 1993). In short, Cultural/Radical Ecofeminists analyzed environmental problems from within their critique of patriarchy and offered alternatives that could liberate both women and nature (Merchant, 1995).

Criticisms of cultural/radical Ecofeminism are based on the notion that this particular framework reinforces sex-role stereotyping by making "essentialist[xiii], universalist and historical" claims about women and nature and therefore undermine the notion that men can also develop ethic of caring of nature (Kaur, 2012). It is also an important criticism that the homogenisation of women through cultural Ecofeminism irrespective of women of class, race, caste, age and ethnicity creates a vague understanding of problems associated to this. For scholars like Merchant cultural Ecofeminism adopts the very dichotomy of men and women and fails to analyze capitalism (Morita, 2007). In this connection, Tong argues that cultural/radical Ecofeminism considers women as uniquely relating to nature and to each other in ways that men cannot. This, in a way, limits women to their bodies and therefore relegates the possibilities for womanhood to be necessarily caring and compassionate, without freeing women from the 'negative cultural baggage' associated with this stereotype (Tong, 1998).

Spiritual Ecofeminism: This is another variant of Ecofeminism which emphasises the role of women as life givers and consider them as engendered to closer connections with the earth (Sturgeon, 1997, as cited in Manion, 2002). According to Starhawk - a leading Spiritual Econfeminist - the three most important concepts of earth-based spiritualities are the immanence of the Goddess in the living world; interconnection of mind, body, and nature; and a compassionate lifestyle (Tong, 1998). Spiritual Ecofeminism emphasises the reproductive forces of women and their bodies (Yılmaz, 2010). Spiritual Ecofeminists have been criticized for trying to replace politics with religion and subsequently engaging in spiritual activity instead of "serious" thought about how to improve the state of the world (Tong, 1998).

Barry (1999) has categorised Ecofeminism into materialist Ecofeminism, essentialist Ecofeminism, and resistance Ecofeminism. According to Barry "essentialist Ecofeminism essentialize the female principle and "is to reverse the gendered dualism". This idea is close to that of cultural Ecofeminism of Merchant. Resistance Ecofeminism stands between essentialist Ecofeminism and materialist Ecofeminism. This can be regarded as standing between cultural Ecofeminism and socialist Ecofeminism in Merchant's classification, as its interest is mainly in practical political issues and the Third World. Materialist Ecofeminism resemble to social and socialist

Ecofeminism. Materialist Ecofeminism considers "women and nature both suffer at the hands of patriarchy and capitalism" (Barry, 1999). To conclude, different schools in Ecofeminism highlights the woman nature relation that is overpowered by patriarchy.

Ecofeminism in India

The history of Ecofeminism in India traces back to Bishnoi movement and later through Chipko movement, Silent Valley movement and Narmada Bachao Andolan. The study on various environmental movements suggests that the most participants in these movements are women as environmental degradation itself is the very question of lives of women (Shiva, 1988). The important women who inspires and leading environmental protection movements in India are Vandana Shiva, Medha Patkar, Arundhati Roy, Daya Bhai, C.K. Janu, Sugatha Kumari, Sunita Narain, and Sara Joseph (Rao, 2012; Specter, 2014; Kerr, 2011; Kaur, 2012; Hassan, 2014; Prasad, 2007; Steur, 2011; Sheoran, 2014; Bhattacharjee, 2013; Rohit, 2012; Joy, 2005; Sebastian, 2014; Krishna & Jha, 2014; & Praseetha, 2015). One of the prominent Ecofeminist in India is Vandana Shiva, who is identified as a radical/cultural Ecofeminist[xiv] (Lorentzen & Eaton, 2002), whose eco-feminist thought is generally more concerned with the Hindu tradition (Tollefsen, 2011).

Vandana Shiva invokes notion about women, spirituality and nature by emphasising that "women in India are an intimate part of nature, both in imagination and in practice. At one level, nature is symbolized as the embodiment of the feminine principle, and at another, she is nurtured by the feminine to produce life and provide sustenance" (Shiva, 1988:37). Shiva put forth two arguments in her book, 'Staying Alive; Women, Ecology and Survival in India'. First is notion of "the feminine principle" (prakriti, as it is the source of life), which has strong connections to Spiritual Ecofeminism and ideas from Hindu mythology. Secondly, the political, socialist Ecofeminism which reflect strong critique of masculine worldview along with a critique of the west for bringing mal-development and capitalism through colonialism and globalisation to east (Tollefsen ,2011). Shiva (1988) argues that the patriarchical roots of western development models, science and technology affects women's right in environment. Privatisation of the forests and rivers and construction of dams make the lives of village women more difficult. Vandana Shiva strongly fights against Genetically Modified seeds and founded Navdanya Movement with the aim of save seeds from biopiracy.

Another prominent Ecofeminist in India is Bina Agarwal. Her ideas placed her in the group of Socialist Ecofeminists. Bina Agarwal stands for Feminist Environmentalism. Agarval criticises Shiva for on two grounds; first, Shiva considers women as homogenous group and second she tries to root women and environmental relation to Hindu mythology of Shakti and Prakriti[xv]. Agarval stresses that women's position in environment varies according to caste, class, race and religion. She argues that rural poor are actively participating in environment protection than rich urban women as they are mostly vulnerable to environment degradation. Thus it is women's context that determines their participation in environment protection which is socially and historically determined (Agarwal, 2000). In her study on the participation on Community Forestry protection method in India and Nepal by women, Agarwal (2000) highlights the fact that simple representation will not uphold the right of women in environment protection, but the representation in Executive decision

making bodies can better protect women's right. She argues that the women's right in property make them more compatible for better protection of environment.

Conclusion

As the discussions above indicate, humans and other life systems depend highly on environment for their very existence. The reckless exploitation of natural resources results in environment degradation which makes life miserable. In turn, this compels people to take efforts for protection of environment. The need of protection of environment and mitigation of environmental degradation results in emphasise of significance of the correlation between the human activities and environment through notions of natural selection, social ecology, tragedy of commons, deep ecology, animal rights, Ecofeminism, eco socialism, bio regionalism, eco psychology, and eco theology. Even though Ecofeminism, at the beginning, deals with women environment relations to deconstruct the notion of patriarchal domination on women and nature, it also explored the connections among many issues: environmental degradation, economics, electoral politics, animal liberation, reproductive politics, biotechnology, spirituality, holistic health practices, sustainable agriculture, and racism, homosexism and queer and problems of marginalised.

The whole arguments of Ecofeminists reach to the point that women and environment are closely related and degradation of environment is directly result in degradation of women as well as other marginalised sections as there exist connections between environmental degradation and sexist oppression. It supports and highlights women's effort to conserve environment. Ecofeminism is based on the idea that important knowledge about ecology and women must be deconstructed from the old understanding of male domination. The core ideas of Ecofeminism can be summed as the four minimal claims of Ecofeminism (Karen Warren 1987): there are important connections between the oppression of women and the oppression of nature; understanding the nature of these connections is necessary to any adequate understanding of the oppression of women and the oppression of nature; feminist theory and practice must include an ecological perspective; and solutions to ecological problems must include a feminist perspective

As a living organism, human cannot survive without ensuring the protection of nature/environment. Emphasises of Ecofeminists to the importance of the relations between the human activities and the environment has increased the importance of this theory among various branches of human and social sciences. To conclude, the significance of Ecofeminism in our time is that, on the one hand, it offers a way of thinking to organise ourselves by establishing interconnectedness with our environment and on the other hand, it addresses the subjugation of women and other marginalized people.

End Notes

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[i] Carolyn Merchant highlight   two different events that contributed to the spread of the term   as the first one was the conference on "Women and Life on Earth: Ecofeminism in the 1980s," organized in Amherst (Massachusetts) in 1980 by Ynestra King, Celeste Wesson, Grace Paley, Anna Gyorgy, Christina Rawley, Nancy Jack Todd, and Deborah Gaventa and the scond was the Women's Pentagon Action to protest against nuclear weapons and weapon development in general (as cited in Alenso, 2013).

[ii] The important works of Karren .J.Warren in the field of Ecofeminism are *Ecofeminist Philosophy: A Western Perspective on What It Is and Why It Matters (2000), Ecological Feminist Philosophies (1996), and Ecological Feminism(1994).* The Ecofeminist works of Val Plumwood are *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature(1993), Environmental Culture: The Crisis of Ecological Reason(2001).* The contribution of Yenstra King on Ecofeminism are *Towards Ecological Feminism and a Feminist Ecology (19893), Engendering a Peaceful Planet: Ecology, Economy, and Ecofeminism in Contemporary Context (1995).* The Ecofeminist works of Ariel Shalleh is *Ecofeminism as Politics: Nture, Marx and Postmodern (1997). .* The important works of Susan Griffin is *Women and Nature:The Roaring inside Her (1978).* The Ecofeminist Works of Carolyn Merchant are, *The Death of Nature (1980), Earth care : Women and Environment (1995).* The Ecofeminist works of Vandana Shiva are *Earth Democracy : Justice, Sustainability and Peace (2005), Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Survival in India(1988),* and *Biopiracy: The Plunder of Nature & Knowledge (1997).*

[iii] Ecological ethics is the part of environmental philosophy. It deals with rules and norms of human behaviour towards the natural (biotic and abiotic) environment, as well as the social environment (Gola,2013). The environmental ethics is against putting human as centre all species of planet. The theory of Ecofeminism combines environmental ethics with feminism as it asserts that western patriarchal binaries place non human and women in same category and want to deconstruct the binaries to overcome sexists' oppression and environmental degradation.

[iv] Example is the political party, Ecologists-Alternatives (EA)-Federation of Ecological and Alternative Organisations in Greece, which prioritized ecological concerns and gender equality. Most of the women voted them and become the leaders as this party promotes political ecology agenda for social change with gender equality.

[v] Ecofeminst argues that the biotechnological methods, in both ways of decreasing and increasing the fertility, via the selection and election of genes, are not innocent in treating women. Ecofeminists oppose to the control of women in their pregnancy, and after the birth through the biotechnological innovation which result in the very interference of the women bodies (Yılmaz, 2010).

[vi] African-American Ecofeminists, identify with racism as the first and most dominant oppression in their experience, while sexism is secondary(Oster,2012)

[vii] Gretta Gaard (1997) rewrite Val Plumwood's dualism by including heterosexual/queer, reason/erotic and financially empowered/impoverished. She strongly stands for the inclusion of queer theory in Ecofeminism so that it strength both and criticize the Western Patriarchy notion of consider queer as anti-natural. Thus the relation of queer theory to Ecofeminism is stated by Gaard.

[viii] A branch variously called "vegetarian Ecofeminism or animal right.

[ix] Warrens highlights three terms to describe the core of Ecofeminism: feminist, ecological and multicultural. According to Warren, Ecological feminism (Ecofeminism) is feminist as its aim is to eliminate male-gender bias to abolish patriarchy and propose an alternative and non-oppressive framework of thought. As the main aim of Ecological feminism is to value and to preserve ecosystems, it is ecological according to Warren, Ecological feminism(Ecofeminism) can be described as multicultural because it analyzes the interconnections that exist among all forms of domination such as racism, classism, imperialism, colonialism or sexism (Warren, 1994). Chris Cuomo(1998) believes Ecofeminism is multicultural as it is placed "at

the crossroads of feminist, anti-racist, and environmentalist movements, as well as critiques of capitalism, heterosexism, homophobia, and other forms of oppression based on the dualistic construction and maintenance of inferior, devalued, or pathologized/naturalized Others" (as cited in Alenso, 2013).

[x] Antrapocentrism argues that human beings are the central or most significant entities in the world. This philosophy regards humans as separate from and superior to nature and holds that human life has intrinsic value and other entities (including animals, plants, mineral resources, and so on) are resources that to be exploited for the benefit of humankind (Boslaugh, 2013).

[xi] Therbon, 2004 & Walby, 1990, define "partiachy as a system of social structure and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women. The use of the term social structure is important as it clearly implies rejection both of biological determinism and the notion that every individual man is in a dominant position and every women is a subordinate one". It is a system developed and controlled by powerful men, in which women, children, other men, and nature itself are dominated (Christ, 2013). It is oppressive in social, political, economic, and cultural environments. Patriarchy is an authoritative system, which t resulted from the Western European historical and sociological approaches to the development of social and family structures (Asante & Mazama, 2004).

[xii] Women, nature, people of third world and nonhumans are at the mercy of the interests of dominant groups, as they have to suffer domination and exploitation of those who compete for the right to define the need of these unprivileged groups (Milton, 1993).

[xiii] Essentialism usually refers to the assumption that a subject (for example, a "woman") is constituted by presocial, innate, unchanging qualities (Carlassare, 1994).

[xiv] Some Scholars like Tøllefsen, put Vandana Shiva in the category of socialist, materialist Ecofeminism, particularly the anti-capitalist and postcolonial writing by Shiva (Godfrey, 2005).

[xv] Shiva propagates the concept of Shakti and Prakrithi to assert the power of feminine principle."The tension between the opposites from which motion and movement arises is depicted as the first appearance of dynamic energy (Shakti). All existence arises from this primordial energy which is the substance of everything, pervading everything. The manifestation of this power, this energy, is called nature (Prakriti). Nature, both animate and inanimate, is thus an expression of Shakti, the feminine and creative principle of the cosmos; in conjunction with the masculine principle (Purusha), Prakriti creates the world. Without Shakti, Shiva, the symbol for the force of creation and destruction, is as powerless as a corpse (Shiva, 1988).

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