

# Eco-Feminism and Its Various Dimensions: A Literary Criticism

## Abstract

Various Ecofeminist studies have been done by various thinkers in India as well as abroad. Ecofeminist theory is not a very old theory. In 1974, it started and still it is trying to find a space. IN India Vandana Shiva has been the main proponent of ecofeminist theories. Whereas Karen J. Warren, Maria Mies, Susan etc. are the main western thinkers on ecofeminism.

**Keywords:** Ecofeminism, Ecology, Theories.

## Introduction

It all started in 1974 when Francoise d' Eaubonne in her 'Le Feminisme eu la Mont a book on Ecofeminism'. She was the first women to coin the term and define in words the relationship between women and environment. However, the relationship of a woman with the environment is not new. Women since long had a deep rooted relationship with environment. The reason of this deep rooted relationship can be traced to so many factors. The first being that a woman brings a new life into this world and also care and nurtures her children just like mother nature does. This feeling psychologically relates a woman to nature.

The other reason being that a woman in her day to day life comes in direct contact with nature like buying groceries and other vegetables from the market, cooking food for the family, providing safe drinking water and many other such work. And we all know it very well that a mother is the first person to get disturbed if she doesn't get good quality groceries, clean water and other such basic necessities because she cares for her children, just like mother nature does.

And if the problem of water, grocery etc. persist for a longer time then women are the first one to raise their voice against it. And that what Ecofeminism is. It's basically a movement by which women come together to save the environment for a better tomorrow for themselves and for their children. We all are very much aware about Chipko Movement.

## Aim of the Study

This paper highlights the various literary work on ecofeminism.

## Eco-Feminism – Women and Environment

The first Ecofeminist conference 'Women and Life on Earth:A conference on Ecofeminism in the Eighties 'was held in March 1980 at Amherst. The conference was held after meltdown of Three Mile Island. This meltdown prompted the women of USA to come together to save the Mother Earth.

Ecofeminism is still a theory which is trying to find its place. It came in 1974 when Francoise D. Eaubonne coined the term Ecofeminism for the first time. According to Eaubonne, male dominance and patriarchy are the main reason for the exploitation of women and nature.

Ecofeminist theories are against any sort of oppression, domination and subordination. It raises it's voice against military wars and aggression and also against corporate policy of profit at any cost. These corporate house tend to over exploit nature which poses threat to human beings and other species. All the waste product and residues from factories are thrown unmindfully into rivers and oceans or are dug inside the earth polluting the womb of Mother Earth. Ecofeminism holds the view that if women doesn't defy patriarchy then the life of future generation is not safe.

## Literature Review on Eco Feminism

Smith (2014) in her Essay "Ecofeminism through Anticolonial Framework' says that prior to colonization in Indian and other Asian countries there was no violence, no domination of man over woman, over nature and also no poverty. Both men and women were equally treated. There was a division of labour between women and men but labour of both were given equal status.

## Sarika Singh

Assistant Professor,  
Deptt. of Sociology,  
Raja Harpal Singh  
Mahavidyalaya,  
Singramau, Jaunpur,  
U.P., India

Taylor (2014) in her essay "Women of Color, Environmental Justice and Ecofeminism" says that people of color have to face many problems related to environment like toxic terrorism, environment racism, environmental blackmail and environmental inequality. People of color have started raising these issues at various national and international platform.

In her essay "Learning to Live with Differences-The Challenge of Ecofeminist Community", Plant (2014) argues that we as human being should not try to destroy the diversity on our planet Earth, but rather try to live with all diversities and differences because it is essential for survival of humanity as a whole.

Ganguly (2014) in her article, "Displacement, Rehabilitation and Resettlement: The Case of Maldhari Families of Gir Forest" focus on the issue of development induced displacement and the need for a proper resettlement policy so that the suffering of the people may be reduced to the minimum possible level.

Curtin (2014) in the article, "Womens knowledge as Expert knowledge" says that technological innovations such as plant monoculture irrigation, green revolution had a very negative impact on women. According to an estimate 73 percent of world's water is being used in irrigation but only 20-30 percent of water is being used in the right way. Such waste of water has a tragic impact on women's life. They are responsible for collecting water for the purpose of cooking and drinking.

Karth (2014) in her article, "Ecofeminism and Children" says that children and women in patriarchal society suffer from various kind of discrimination like they are privatized, singularized and stripped of their agency. Children affected at Chernobyl, burned by toxic gases in Bhopal Gas Tragedy and children dying of starvation in Ethiopia are such few examples.

Mies (2010) in her book, "Ecofeminism" argues that European scientist of fifteenth century are all acting as 'Fathers of Obstructing'. They are exploiting the soul of women, nature and colonies in order to get maximum wealth and profit. They are treating women, nature and colonies as spiritless and passive matter which can be dissected and recombined as per the male engineers wishes.

Waren (2000) in her book, "Ecofeminist Philosophy: A Western Perspective on what it is and why it matters" says that among white people, people of color, children, elderly, poor people and third world people, it is often women who suffer disproportionately higher risk and harms than men.

Guha (2000) in his essay titled as "Colonialism and Conflict in the Himalayan Forest" examines the trajectory of social protest in Kumaun during the early decades of 17th century. Kumaun forest once owned collectively by village people saw heavy protest of local people after the forest was declared as State property and was reserved by the Government.

Sharma in his essay, "Rethinking Sustainable Development Ecology and Cultures in India's Developmental Context" says that the present mode of

development has led to many negative impacts on environment and has led to many serious issues like ozone depletion, global warming, toxic pollution, erosion of biodiversity etc.

Mukerjee (2014) in his article "An Ecological Approach to Sociology" argues that ecological method can be applied to many branches of sociology. They can be applied in the study of social evolution and adaption. In America, Huntington has studied the effects of climatic factors on distribution of human energy and opportunities and limitations of civilization in different environments. The culture are a concept of Wissler, Kroeber though confined to anthropological data also has influenced sociology. according to Mukerjee, there is always a balance between natural and vegetable and animal environment including humans in which nature delights and this balance has to be maintained. There should not be one sided exploitation but a mutual give and take.

"Dynamics of Urban Ecology in Upper Kullu Valley: The Himachal Pradesh" written by Pandey (2000) highlights the adverse effects of growing tourism and urbanisation in mountain areas of India. For increasing tourism the Government cuts many trees, hills for building bridges and roads. It takes a heavy toll on environment

#### **Participation of Women in Various Environmental Movement:**

##### **Chipko Movement**

Chipko Movement began in April 1973 in Reni village of Chamoli district, Uttarakhand where hundreds of women came together to save trees from cutting. It was a non-violent movement. In 1987, the Chipko Movement was awarded the Right Livelihood Award. Gaura Devi, Suraksha Devi, Sudesha Devi, Bachni Devi and Chandni Prasad Bhatt were the main participants in this movement.

##### **Appiko Movement**

Inspired by Chipko this movement was started by Appu and Mamtha is Gubbi Gadde in Uttara Kannada district. This movement forced the forest department to change the forest policy on felling of trees 'Appiko' means to hug a tree and save it from cutting on Sep.8, 1983, Pandurang Hegde inspired from Sunderlal Bahuguna started this movement.

##### **Conclusion**

For centuries women and nature had a very close connection. Women were dependent on nature for their various basic necessities like food and fodder. They also worshipped trees on various festivals and occasions example: Vat Vriksha Pooja and worshipping Tulsi and Neem trees. But in today's modern society this close connection of women with the environment has become a little bit fragile. This ignorance of nature has taken a very heavy toll on our lives and existence. But still women of today are aware of environmental issues and they raise their voices when our environment is in danger. This paper tries to cover the various literature review on ecofeminism in India as well as abroad.

**References**

- Chaudhury, Sukant K. 2014. *Sociology of Environment*. New Delhi : Sage.
- Chaudhury, Sukant K. 2002. *Culture Ecology and Sustainable Development*. New Delhi: Sage.
- Ganguli, Varsha. 2014. "Displacement, Rehabilitation, in Sukant K. Chaudhury (ed.) *Sociology of Environment*. New Delhi: Sage.
- Guha, Ramchandra. 2000. *Social Ecology*. New Delhi: Oxford
- Kaushik, Anubha. 2012. *Perspective in Environmental Studies*. New Delhi : New Age.
- MacIver, R.M. and Page, Charles, H. (2002). *Society and Introductory Analysis*. New Delhi: Macmillan.
- Mukhopadhyay, Amites. 2012. *Social Movements*. New Delhi: Pearson.
- Sharma, S.L. 2014 "Rethinking Sustainable Development-Ecology and Culture in India's Developmental Context" in Sukant K. Chaudhury (ed.) *Sociology of Environment*. New Delhi:Sage.
- [www.wikipedia.com](http://www.wikipedia.com)
- [www.ecofeminism/sociologyand enviromentalism/Britannica.com](http://www.ecofeminism/sociologyandenviromentalism/Britannica.com)
- [www.gac.edu/~lbrammer/ecofeminism.com](http://www.gac.edu/~lbrammer/ecofeminism.com)