

ECOFEMINIST ANALYSIS OF INDIAN FICTION WRITERS

(Selected Novels of Gita Mehta, Arundhati Roy, Sohaila Abdulali, Anuradha Roy and Usha K.R.)

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ABSTRACT

An analytical framework known as ecofeminism is one that investigates feminist ideologies and collectives with a particular focus on the protection of the environment. In her novel "Le Féminisme ou la Mort", which was published in 1974, the French author Françoise d'Eaubonne is generally credited as being the one who first popularized the word. According to ecofeminism, which is founded on the idea that women are inextricably linked to the natural world, there is a correlation between the deterioration of the environment and the oppression of women. According to ecofeminists, the link between women and the environment is proved by the existence of traditionally "female" qualities such as collaboration, caring, and aid. These characteristics are in common between women and the environment. In their work, ecofeminists seek to build linkages between many events, like menstruation and the moon, birth and creation, and other similar phenomena. Attempts are being made by the ecofeminist movement to rethink the conventional ideas that are associated with religion, politics, and the environment. It is the contention of ecofeminist theory that there is a substantial connection between the environmental crisis and the enslavement of women by patriarchal systems. The deeply engrained beliefs of patriarchy are called into question and disproved by this theory. The purpose of this article is to address the tendency that exists in society to neglect the unique connection that exists between women and the environment via the interactions that they have on a daily basis. As a result of their extensive competence in holistic and ecological awareness of the processes that occur in nature, the women who participate in subsistence economies are able to build wealth in conjunction with the environment. The novels *A Riversutra* (1993) by Gita Mehta, *The God of Small Things* (1997) by Arundhati Roy, *The Madwoman of Jogare* (1998) by Sohaila Abdulali, *An Atlas of Impossible Longing* (2008) by Anuradha Roy, and *Monkey-Man* (2010) by Usha K.R. are examples of novels that cover the entire spectrum of ecofeminism, from its beginnings to contemporary urban ecofeminism. This presentation will take a look at the literary works of these well-known authors from the point of view of ecofeminism by evaluating examples from activism and literature that prominently incorporate women, the purpose of this research is to investigate the historical development of ecofeminism in India. Recognizing the relevance of female authors and the great contributions they have made to the fields of literature and environmental studies is absolutely necessary in this day and age, when technological

advancements are occurring at a rapid pace all over the world. In this article, the notion of ecofeminism and its several manifestations in India are investigated. It argues that women have a complicated connection with the environment, which challenges the conventional dichotomy between nature and civilization and places them in a position that is somewhere in the middle. There is a tremendous amount of attention placed on this specific facet by female authors who compose Indian literature in the English language. In order to give the backdrop for this study and illustrate the effect of the nature/culture dichotomy on concepts of gendered (environmental) citizenship, a short explanation of the dualism will be offered.

KEY WORDS: Ecofeminism, Fiction, Indian Literature, Challenges, Environment.

INTRODUCTION

The idea of ecofeminism is not necessarily a new one; nonetheless, it has been around for a substantial amount of time. Despite the fact that ecofeminism and ecocriticism are closely connected, Europe and the United States have been the primary sources of inspiration for both of these movements. Nevertheless, neither of them is able to fully address the fundamental problem of ecofeminism, which is the recognition of the "double-bind" that women who are both female and colonized are forced to endure [1]. In order to build an ecofeminist perspective, it is essential to integrate ecocriticism and ecofeminism into a cohesive analytical framework. Furthermore, this viewpoint acknowledges the interdependence that exists between environmental exploitation and gender oppression, as well as the linkages that exist between these two phenomena and racial and economic inequality, colonialism, and neo-colonialism. The interpretation of environmental literature and criticism from a rigorous and moralistic perspective has continually depicted nature as something that can be obtained, defended, or supported. This is in contrast to the view that nature is an autonomous entity with its own history and importance. Consequently, this has had an effect on women in their position as inhabitants of regions that were under colonial rule. To confront the continuous existence of colonialist and imperialist behaviours and beliefs that contribute to social and environmental oppression, it is vital to unite environmental and feminist issues [3]. This is because environmental problems and feminist concerns converge. There is a long and illustrious history of environmental activism and movements throughout Africa and South Asia, particularly in India. These movements and activism dates back to a time before ecofeminism became a recognized academic topic in the Western world. In this particular piece of writing, the emphasis is placed on the environmental movement and literature in India that is controlled by women. It is common practice to reference the Chipko movement as a paradigmatic example of grassroots environmental activism in India. This movement has garnered a lot of attention in India.

The ability of the movement to motivate and invigorate women is also an extremely important factor. Within the context of this movement, which sought to put an end to activities like as mining, logging, and deforestation, the term "tree-hugging" was brought into existence. There is a possibility that the myth originated in Uttaranchal, more specifically in the Garhwal area of Uttar Pradesh, which is located in India. It is possible that the beginning of this

movement may be traced back to the growing commercialization of the Garhwal area as well as the government's insufficient efforts to encourage its growth. The choices that were made at the state level, such as providing license to private contractors for the extraction of timber expressly for the manufacturing of cricket bats, had a tremendous impact on the women who lived in the neighbourhood where the decisions were made. It was the most disastrous flood ever recorded, and it was accompanied by similarly catastrophic landslides, which were both caused by the tremendous deforestation that occurred in 1970. Medha Patkar, C.K. Janu, Arundhati Roy, and Mahasweta Devi are some of the most prominent contemporary women who have taken the initiative to advocate for environmental initiatives and solve the issues that are associated with them. The Narmada Bachao Andolan is a social movement in Gujarat, India, that is opposed to the construction of the Sardar Sarovar Dam on the Narmada River. Medha Patkar is the leader of this campaign. The movement includes those who advocate for human rights, agriculturalists, environmentalists, and indigenous populations. Adivasis are also included in the movement. Mahasweta Devi, a well-known feminist novelist and activist, has mostly concentrated her efforts on advocating for the rights of India's indigenous tribal people and protecting the biological surroundings in which they live.

Since 2003, C.K. Janu, an indigenous lady who lives in the Muthanga jungles in North Kerala, has been gaining a lot of attention for her continued activism for the environment. In reaction to the inability of the state government to fulfil its vow of distributing 500 acres of land to each Adivasi household, an act of protest was carried out. C.K. Janu, an Adivasi woman, has been the driving force behind the incorporation of a subaltern identity politics component into the movement. This is in addition to the movement's advocacy for social justice and environmental sustainability. It is noteworthy that a substantial amount of India's ecocritical writing and activity have not been included in the environmental literary canon, despite the fact that the nation has made great progress with regard to environmental issues. Activist women authors of postcolonial Indian literature who have expressed themselves in the English language have, for the most part, been ignored by academics who advocate for ecocritical perspectives. Consequently, it is of the utmost importance to determine the relevance of female authors in relation to this endeavour. Not only do Indian women authors investigate female subjectivity in order to develop an autonomous identity outside of patriarchal culture, but they also maintain their relevance by incorporating social problems into their literary works. The literary achievements of Indian women authors, particularly those from the 20th century onwards, are rapidly gaining recognition as a potent method of expressing feminist principles and embracing modernism. This recognition is being made by an increasing number of persons. The impact that they have had on the literary world of English-speaking countries cannot be denied. Contemporary Indian female authors are expressing their perspectives on the effects that globalization has had on gender norms, family relationships, and the environment in general.

CONFLICTING VIEWS ON WOMEN'S ROLES IN INDIAN LITERATURE ON ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

The purpose of this presentation is to investigate the importance of understanding postcolonial ecofeminism in the literary works of Indian women writers. It is an attempt to discover the insights that these authors have to give on environmental ideology, theory, and the experiences that women have really lived through. Some of the authors whose works are now being evaluated include Gita Mehta's *A Riversutra* (1993), Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997), Sohaila Abdulali's *The Madwoman of Jogare* (1998), Anuradha Roy's *An Atlas of Impossible Longing* (2008), and Usha K.R.'s *The Monkey-Man* (2010), amongst others. There is a wide variety of themes that are associated with early ecofeminism and urban ecofeminism that are covered in these publications. Within the realm of ecofeminism, Arundhati Roy is the only female writer from India who is acknowledged for her outstanding contributions. It is the imaginary community of Ayemenem, which stems from Roy, which serves as a reflection of the moral degradation that the characters, namely the Ipe family, experience. During the course of the novel, Ammu and Velutha's experiences with caste and gender bias in Kerala are juxtaposed with the crucial issues of the contamination of the river Meenachal and the History House, both of which serve as essential factors in showing ecological exploitation. While everything is going on, Baby Kochamma emerges as a severe enforcer of society's rules and standards. Everything stands in striking contrast to Ammu's unflinching desire for a better future, which is also the main point of the story's ending. The agony that Baby Kochamma experienced as a result of the priest's attachment and subsequent departure is the root cause of her negative reaction to the romantic engagement between people of different castes. Furthermore, she states that she is a professional ornamental gardener. When she starts to gain joy from watching television rather than caring to her garden, it gradually becomes neglected and unorganized. This is a significant development.

Within the pages of the book, Roy regularly depicts the dreadful phenomenon of sibling incest, which is a symbol of the macabre. Even before Roy's work became phenomenally successful, feminist authors like Anita Desai and Kamala Markandya had already investigated the connection that exists between women and the natural world. Despite the fact that these authors focus largely on the personal experiences of women, they also provide incisive political perspectives on wider social concerns and the culture of India as a whole. The female authors who write in this subgenre are underrated, in part because they have a propensity to concentrate on emotional complexities and intimate encounters. *Nectar in a Sieve*, written by Markandya, and *Fire on the Mountain*, written by Desai, are two books that explore the hidden depths of women's characters and show the dark colours of nature. Throughout the course of Markandya's story, Rukmini and her family are brought dangerously close to starvation as a result of the unpredictable weather and the extended time of drought. Due to the grave financial conditions that they are currently facing, Ira, Rukmini's daughter, is driven to join in the profession of prostitution. Nevertheless, Rukmini finally accepts the fact that her fate has already been

decided. In the story told by Desai, the rape of Ila Das takes place in the midst of the full darkness of the fields, which are supposed to be a safe haven for all living things. In the final chapter of Desai's story, Raka sets fire to the forest, which serves as a metaphorical image of the culmination of the horrible ordeals that the ladies have been through.

Contemporary literary works such as Abdulali's *The Madwoman of Jogare*, Mehta's *A River Sutra*, Anuradha Roy's *An Atlas of Impossible Longing*, and Usha K.R.'s *Monkey-Man* all explore the topic of female perspectives on urban living. This is a significant theme in these works. The availability of possibilities for women in the city is in line with the global discourse on equal opportunity for all individuals, which is championed by globalization. In light of the fact that nature and civilization are inherently opposed to one another, this kind of interaction cannot exist. The movement of people from rural to urban areas is illustrative of the dynamic character of postcolonial ecofeminism, which goes beyond the confines of rural or wilderness settings. Aspects of urban madness and paranoia are utilized in these works in order to highlight the issues that are brought about by globalization and the growth of metropolitan areas. The examples they provide demonstrate how cities can be places where both innovation and destruction may take place.

CONCLUSION

In addition, the ideas of ecofeminism and the concept of development are strengthened by fictional writing written by Indian women. This literature explores the interrelationships that exist between women and the environment. Through their writings, these female authors challenge the idea that women and the environment are two separate but intertwined entities. They do so by drawing inspiration from cultural ecofeminism and the teachings of Vandana Shiva. These paintings show women and the environment in a variety of ways, some of which are favourable while others are bad. The unthinking acceptance of the connection between women and nature appears to be unconvincing when seen in the context of India and other emerging countries. The idea that women necessarily have good views toward environmental protection is called into question by these authors. This is because women are disproportionately exposed to environmental degradation, reconceptualising nature and culture as interrelated and ever-evolving entities, rather than as conceptions that are fixed and in opposition to one another, is essential to the process of gender inclusion. To acknowledge the relevance of women's care giving work, this intrinsically binds women to environmental stewardship, and to prioritize the development of women's material position as ecological citizens are both vital. It is essential to emphasize the improvement of women's material status. The conceptions of women's labour and women's (ecological) citizenship are emerging as ways to question conventional notions about the boundary between nature and culture, ultimately resulting in the dismantling of this binary opposition. Another operational dualism that may be found in both theoretical and practical situations is the nature/culture dualism, which is only one of several operational dualisms that exist. A complex understanding of gendered ecological citizenship is not taken into account, and women are not acknowledged as humans who own many identities or as vital elements of this

understanding. There are a number of repercussions that urban women face in regard to urban locations and the city as a whole. This is because urban women have the right to both the city and its surroundings. In conclusion, I have demonstrated the relevance of challenging the contradiction that exists between culture and nature, which undeniably links women with the natural world. It is presented that the ladies, who are defying the binary opposition, are having ambiguous feelings towards nature and that they are in a world that is intermediate and transcends the two opposites. This kind of ambivalence is strongly restricted by the majority of ecofeminist theory and groups that are headed by women. Through their ability to shed light on the complex relationship that exists between women and the environment, female Indian fiction authors who work in English provide a vital alternative to both theory and practice. Through an examination of the ways in which Indian women's fiction challenges and challenges prevailing narratives about women's existence and the global setting, this research calls into question the norms that have been established thus far.

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