



AN ECOFEMINIST READING OF JAHNAVI BARUA'S REBIRTH

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Abstract:

The term Ecofeminism shows the relationship between Ecology and Feminism. Ecofeminism is a branch of Ecocriticism which studies how the oppression of women is linked with nature. Generally the Land is compared to a Feminine gender as it is fertile and nurtures the life similar to a female who nurtures her family and finally owned by a male just like property. Ecofeminism on the other hand means a way of thinking which encourages interconnectedness of people with the environment and addressing the suppression and oppression of women alongside. This paper focus on how the protagonist Kaberi is associated with nature and also about her psychological growth that interlinked with the nature and with the other characters in Jahnvi Barua's Rebirth. The author explained the condition of Indian women under the patriarchy and how anthropocentric activities in the development process affect nature and Women.

Keywords:Ecofeminism, Nature, Women, Environment, Marital Conflicts.

Ecofeminism is a branch of Ecocriticism that shows the relationship between feminism and ecology. It studies how the oppression of women is interlinked with nature. Naturally the Land is compared to a feminine gender as it is fertile and nurtures the life similar to a woman who nurtures her family and finally owned by a man as a property. Ecofeminism as a movement started in the 1970's and 80's, that determines the connection between the domination of nature and the exploitation and oppression of women. The term Ecofeminism is popularized through various social movements and through various activities against environmental destruction. The term Ecofeminism is coined by a French feminist Francoise d' Eaubonne in the year 1974. Ecofeminists critiques the connection between male violence against women and nature." Ecofeminism is a value system, a social movement and a practice but it also offers a political analysis that explores the links between androcentrism and environmental destruction" (Birkeland 18). According to Janis Birkeland, Ecofeminism is defined as the combination of value system, social movement and practice and also it tries to connect the problems encountered by women and the environment. In other words, Ecofeminism isa branch of feminism that sees environmentalism and relationship between women and Earth. It draws on the concept of gender to analyze the relationship between humans and the natural world .Ecofeminism as a movementresists the dominationof women by men. It is seeking a new relationship between man,women and Nature.In the other words,in the combination of Feminism and environmentalism emerged ecofeminism as 'domination' is a key aspect that links both 'isms'. Ecofeminism on the whole

projects the idea that life in nature is maintained through cooperation, love, respect and care. Ecofeminism emphasizes respect towards nature and women.

Vandana Shiva an Indian scholar, Philosopher, Environmental activist and an anti- globalization. She was an participant in the Chipko movement of 1970s, which used non violent activism to protest the deforestation in the Garhwal Himalayas, Uttarakhand, India. Generally Chipko movement considered as the Women's movement. Through many movements and actions, women marched forward with their aim to protect the trees from felling and the reason behind was sustainability. There has always been an ecoconsciousness in an Indian psyche as our culture always gives importance to nature, seeing women and nature as property, Nature has something divine and also worshipping it as goddess. Vandana Shiva in her book quoted that, "Women in India are an intimate part of nature, both in imagination and in practice" (Shiva 37). Shiva expresses that women are often directly involved with nature, through their work and are the guardians of natural resources that are needed to sustain the family and community.

Vandana Shiva stated that the Chipko movement is "an extension of traditional "Gandhian Satyagraha". According to her, there is a relation between women and nature and expressed that they are related "not in passivity but in creativity and in the maintenance of life". In India nature is viewed as sacred and forests are worshipped. Ecofeminism seeing men as the curator of culture; women as the curator of nature. It emphasizes both women and nature must be respected. It also traces the similarities between nature and women in relation to man much like feminism promotes a gynocentric perspective a concept critiquing an androcentric dualism. The present article narrates how nature, things, flora and fauna which contributes to the transformation of the protagonist in the novel Rebirth from a meek, docile girl to a bold lady; transformation of Kaberi from vulnerable wife to some one who knows her own individuality. The nature provided a lot of courage to women for their transformation from docile to bold.

Jahnavi Barua is one of the women writers who brings out the connection between women and Environment through her novels. North East women's writings have considerably focused on the different challenges for the women in the forms of patriarchal obsession. North East women writer like Temsula Ao, Mamang Dai, Easterine Iralu, Udipana Gowswami and others portrayed bold and determine women who make a mark for themselves in the family, community and the society. Barua is an Assamese born Indian writer who carved a place for herself in Indian writing in English. Rebirth is her second work, First novel released in 2010, mainly set in Assam and Bengaluru. The story touches upon various themes – family, belonging, finding oneself, self love and marital conflicts. The novel Rebirth was short listed for Man Asian Literary Prize in 2011 and Common Wealth Book Prize in 2012. The major part of the story is set in Assam where the protagonist Kaberi was born and brought up and later on discovers herself.

Kaberi, the protagonist and the narrator of the novel interacts the readers as a woman who has throughout her life suppressed her individuality and had let others make decision for her. Kaberi is an Assamese girl who is replanted to the metropolitan city Bengaluru after her marriage with IT professional Ranjith. The author weaves up the entire life of Kaberi in the lush green terrain of Assam.

Sometimes-not very often when I missed the open skies of my childhood, I would step out the flat, locking it carefully behind me, and run up the stairs to the terrace where I was surrounded by the sky. Still, it was never as blue as I remembered and I was left with an ache in my stomach as I leaned against the low wall.(1)

As the story progresses Kaberi and her friend Preetha along with her friend's autistic son Tarun goes for a boat ride in the Kabani River. Here she recalls her visit to Kaziranga wild life sanctuary, while on the boat they suddenly spot a tiger faraway.

--- the boat is silent, no one talks we are imprisoned in our own thoughts. A tiger always seems to have this effect on people, robs one of all speech. It cuts us down to size in a way reminding us of our largely insignificant place on the immense stage of nature (58)

When the story opens we find Kaberi is a pregnant of seven months. The entire story unfolds in a monologue that this mother to be is having with her unborn child. she speaks to her unborn child everything that occurs in her life. Rnjith was waiting for a child but Kaberi was late in this. Ranjith moved towards other women having relationship. When Kaberi came to know this thing her entire life was doomed to her life. She did get back. After Ron leaving the home, Kaberi came to know that she was a pregnant but she does not want to tell this Ron. If she tells to Ron she knows that Ron will come to her surely, every time she is thinking to make a phone call but she could not. As a woman betrayed by her husband she wants her husband just come for her without knowing this news.

This tea garden, enchanting oases of green calm, were frightening places to me. This was a world far removed from my humble one. Great wooden bungalows, some over a hundred years old, stood proudly in a sea of tea bushes, filled with polished teak and rosewood furniture and equally polished...(70)

The story revolves around Kaberi who got married to Ranjith without knowing the man she is married to. She has to move Bengaluru after her marriage from Assam, which was faraway from her grownup place. She has to start her life all over again in a new place adapting to the new circumstances with out any complaints. Both her family and Ranjith family are different in traditions and customs. But in due course of time . she has to deal with an unfaithful husband, pangs of loneliness and loss of her child hood friend Joya , the death of her father. Jahnavi Barua explains the psyche of such men in society how easily betray a woman's heart on the pretext of letter's infertile womb.

Intimacy was something I was hopeless with. That did not mean I did not desire it-I know there are people who are solitary and impatient with company but I was not one of them – infact,I craved with a hunger that was almost vulgar.(72).

The entire story unfolds in a monologue that this mother to be is having with her unborn child. Again in her lonely days in the more lonely cold flat in Bengaluru she tells us about her childhood days her best friend Joy and her parents. she tells her unborn child that how she faces marital conflicts and how she suppressed by her husband. Barua portrays how little respect a man has for his wife's inability to produce a child, he abandons her only to make a selfish return on learning about her pregnancy later. After knowing this news Ranjith came to her and trying to appease her. But Kaberi could not accept him heartfully. Readers came to know the psyche of such men in society who easily betrayed and suppressed a woman's heart.

A rare December rain has fallen in the night. When I wake up in the morning it is still raining, A fine Drizzle that blows in with the wind through my open window.(102)

At the beginning of the story she is a very quiet docile lady with an unfaithful as well as abusive husband towards the end of the story a tremendous transformation happens within herself. She emerges as a confident person as well as an individual who knows the strength within herself. Ironically perhaps, considering her violent marriage there is a sense of calmness and serenity in Kaberi's world view. Even when agitated she does not use any aggressive language. She hardly gets angry or agitated. This is mostly made up by the end as she finds a way to live without her husband, Kaberi emerges out of the dark night to behold a day.

Not even two days passed since I was at your father's house sitting in front of this same river at this morning the river takes me by surprise. (188)

As her pregnancy progresses Kaberi get ready for the birth of her child as well as her own rebirth. There are significant subplots, characters, things, flora and fauna which contribute to her transformation from a vulnerable wife to someone who knows her own individuality. Promises to illumine her road ahead without the need for her to look back, even for once. The author has interlinked the twin concerns of women and environment. It is necessary to love the nature and to lend a supporting hand, as a human being each and every one has the responsibility to protect the nature on one side and women on the other.

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