



## Nature: A Solace of Human Life – Wild Geese

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### Abstract:

The purpose of this paper is to emphasize the spiritual/cultural eco-feministic theory and its embodiment in a poem. *Wild Geese* by an American poet Mary Oliver encrusts the theory of spiritual ecofeminism in a hypnotic tone. Mary Oliver, a distinguished and most beloved poet of America penned more than fifteen collections of poetry and various proses. The poem *Wild Geese* mentions how nature presents itself as a solace to humans, predominantly women. The poem describes the way nature extends a hand to humans even when humans tend to exploit and misuse the ecosystem.

Keywords: Ecofeminism, Wild Geese, Mary Oliver

Ecofeminism represents the twin concepts – ecology and feminism. Ecology is the study of how organism interrelates with each other and with their physical environment and to understand the distribution and abundance of living things in the environment on the other hand feminism at its core is the equality of both men and women.

The union of both the term is ecofeminism. Francoise d'Eaubonne, who used the term for the first time believed that there is a direct association between the oppression of women and the denigration of nature. The liberation of women and nature cannot be separated. It also portrays the overexploitation of women and nature. Noël Sturgeon in her book *Ecofeminist Nature* defines Ecofeminism as 'The connections between environmentalism and feminisms'.

Ecofeminism is of various disciplines – Liberal Ecofeminism, Vegetarian Ecofeminism, Materialist Ecofeminism, Spiritual/Cultural Ecofeminism and Radical Ecofeminism. Spiritual Ecofeminism doesn't mean that it belongs to a particular religion. It means that the Earth breathes as a human does. Cultural Ecofeminism incites the association of women and the environment. It brings out the fact that humans still depend on the environment to satisfy their needs.

Mary Jane Oliver was born and raised in Maple Hill Heights, Ohio. She attended Ohio State University and Vassar College but didn't receive a degree from either institution. Her *New and Selected Poems* (1992) won the National Book Award, *House of Light* (1990) the Christopher Award, *American Primitive* (1983) for which she received the Pulitzer Prize. She had also written books of prose which include *Long Life: Essays and Other Writings* (2004), *Blue Pastures* (1995), *A Poetry Handbook* (1994). Mary Oliver is known for her buoyant, awe-filled reflections on nature. Her honours include the American Academy of Arts & Letters Award, a Lannan Literary Award and the Poetry Society of America's Shelley Memorial Prize.

In her poems, Mary Oliver weaves coherent imagery which connects the natural world to the readers. Her other prominent works are *The Night Traveller*, *American Primitive*, *No Voyage and Other Poems*. Mary Oliver is considered to be an ecofeminist poet of the age.

The poem *Wild Geese* is portrayed in a fascinating tone. The ultimate notion of this poem is to make the readers feel the connection towards the environment. The poem is addressed directly to the readers, predominantly to women.

*You do not have to be good  
 You do not have to walk on your knees  
 for a hundred miles through the desert, repenting.*

The very first line of the poem explicitly states that a woman shouldn't have to be good all the time, being submissive to the men around and plead for their forgiveness for the mistakes which a woman have never made. The second line quotes the deeper psychology of a woman, even when the mistakes are made by men, it is always she who repents. The poem is addressed to those women who repent for the sins of others.

*You only have to let the soft animal of your body  
 love what it loves.  
 Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine.*

The repetitive use of 'You' manipulates the readers that 'You' are always important than others. The narrative style of the poem asks the women to get out of their circle- running and pleading for others and let their soft animal run for the things they love. The poet explains that every woman of the world has their own dejection. When a woman steps out and shares her depression, the others will continue to share and stand strong together. The poet wants to strengthen the connection between the individual woman.

The connection takes the next step where the poet wants the women/readers to feel the attachment of the world. Even though the world receives the same kind of problems from humans, nature moves on with the endless cycle of death and rebirth. Dejection and despair are strictly the feelings of the human and not nature. The despair of humans is a small part when compared to that of earth. Nature could've perished after all the stress which the humans create to it

The earth proposes an invitation to those who are lonely, the connection between nature and the people discernible in the following lines. The imagery of the wild geese in flight lifts the readers and carry them out of any despair and loneliness. Nature offers itself to those who are lonely. No one can reject the connection. The following lines act as an epiphany of the cultural and spiritual Ecofeminism. Nature considers the women to be lonely of desperation and seeks a connection with them. Nature insists that women are a part of Earth's family. Even when the women are lonely and looking for a connection, nature extends a warm welcome to them. The connection between nature and women is inseparable.

*Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,  
 The world offers itself to your imagination,  
 Calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting –  
 Over and over announcing your place  
 In the family of things.*

In the poem, *Wild Geese* Mary Oliver indisputably decodes the relationship between nature and the women which make the reader find solace when they realise, they have no one to explain themselves to. The comfort which men offer is nothing when compared to that of nature. The poem gives meaning to the relationship which women have with nature. The cultural/spiritual ecofeminism is venerated in the poem *Wild Geese*.

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