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## ECOFEMINISM: A social experiment, not utopia.

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### *Abstract*

From the beginning of Human civilization in world both men and women were seen as companions and equal in division of labor, their work is classified as indistinguishable. We have studied in different ancient societies whether it is Ancient Egypt Civilization, Ancient Greek Civilization etc. The control on natural resources and forests reserves was equal for both the gender, and females were acknowledged as ‘good manager of resources’, because their managerial skills were more prompt. But coming to medieval times the practice of ownership on natural resources, making them boundaries of kingdoms and exchanging women for the sake of matrimonial alliances became very prudent practice, where women were bartered to save their weak bodyguards, in which latter did not try to fight a war. This practice showed that women did have any property rights to safeguard their respect and wish. Both the time periods are showing imbalance in the societal and ecological roles of women. It was only in late 20<sup>th</sup> century when ecofeminism tried to trace the history and connection between women and ecology. This topic questions on the specific persona of women which is not something they have decided for themselves it is something which is given to women and they have to act upon without being consciously aware. This paper wishes to highlight the role of women in Indian society, also trying to pose a social audit with respect to International and National developments which are affecting both Women and Ecology. This paper will also analyze essential critiques on Ecofeminism through Indian women perspectives.

**Keywords:** Ecofeminism, Ecology, Environment, Patriarchal Societies, Gender Equality, chauvinistic

## **Introduction**

Feminine energies are always underestimated or maybe taken for granted. In the race of division of labor, women lagged behind because of their physiography and ability to carry generations. They lost the grip on their parallel environmental resources which were equally theirs too. Their abilities further did not find merit in patriarchal norms and they became passive citizens. The Feudal economies of Medieval Europe further reiterated this idea through orthodoxy, stereotypes and religion. Coming towards the Modern times, women themselves imbibed in different roles to further perpetuate this seclusion in the form of Dowries, the act performed by states were Partition, World Wars etc. In India, when we see in ancient time's popular saints and sages were practicing different farming techniques and their wives were also performing same holy practice of nurturing and feeding Mother Nature by producing nutritious food with medicinal properties. With the advent of foreigners in Indian subcontinent the social structure of the society changed with a lot of social insecurities which were perpetuated through generation in pervasive manner, till now the repercussions of it are visible from our Indian History. And she lost her hold, control and expertise on the other hand she got cage into male oriented, male dominated, male chauvinistic – Patriarchal Society. Industrialization and Globalization further added in her condition negatively. And from this the concept of 'bread earners'- Men and 'domestic work or house wife'- Women came up, where both fundamental beings of human society got away from Mother Nature. These studies, while exploring the interaction of human beings with nature in time and space, did not give adequate importance to the gender dimension in ecological process in Region Specific History.

## **Objective**

The objective of this paper is to analyze the social practices which in history are associated with our culture, nature and women, basically to find out their role and importance. To look into the history and essence of relationship between women and nature. While digging deep in past practices, this paper will analyze some of social problems which degrade the situation of women further and harming surrounded ecology and environment also. The paper will do social audit of the status of patriarchal norms which are involved in deteriorating the condition of women and steps taken by our country's government under different political leadership to balance this imbalance society and ecology.

## **Value**

1. To advocate, emphasize and reiterate what Dr.BR Ambedkar said, "I measure the progress of a community by the degree of progress which women have achieved."
2. Ecofeminism can help in facilitating the balance in society by giving strategic roles.

## **Approach of discussion in this Paper**

This paper discusses different ecofeminism theories till now and also tries to explain a new notion named strategic feminism to tackle the issues to imbalance. The major practices, customs and rituals associated with gender equality and how they sidelined women role and made women distant from nature. This paper will also look into the critical approaches of feminism. Especially in terms of environment, gender, caste, religion and atheism and also keep in record the changes made before and after colonization. While considering all arenas, the initiatives taken by government will also be studies.

## **Methodology**

This paper uses a theoretical method, analyzing secondary data which has been collected from secondary sources such as journals, books, magazines, newspaper articles, oral histories, digital material and website publications.

## **Societal practices**

A definition of social practice is something which is well known and well-practiced in different communities and parts of India; possibly we have observed such practices from many years. Critically speaking some of these practices do not fall into the time period of Modernity, but still as legacy these are followed by societies, whether rural or urban. And now they have become societal burden. Few of them are female feticide, child marriage, dowry etc. These practices are ruining ecology and condition of women as well. On the other hand there are practices like Tulani Biyah, Celebrating festival of Sitala Mata, Jow Boonah in Kanyadaan, Tulsi Vivah etc which are expressing neutrality in social history.

## **Laws made by government till date which facilitate some issues related to women**

The reason behind considering these laws are that our country runs according to democratic constitutional principles and these principles are equal for equals and unequal for unequal's. And while studying these laws I got to know about those changes and transitions which were amended and implemented on public demand with the progressive change in the society. Hindu Succession Act 1956, the Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961, Immoral Traffic Prevention Act, 1986, the Maternity Benefit Act 1961, Provisions of the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005, Protection of Women in Work Places.

## **Viability of these laws in Contemporary scenario.**

The main purpose of the study is to trace the connection between human and nature not only men with nature, as they are still in large numbers to hold property. Also the research will try to indicate that if the distance between nature and women will be increased further then in coming 100years we will destruct whole Planet Earth.

This research will also show that how by different research methods the views and opinions of stakeholders are also heard and use to improve and achieve sustainable and healthy environment with parity in human, or we can also say respecting diversity and inclusion. Also I would critique the greed and lust associated with rapid industrialization and exclusion of humans from agriculture, more mechanisation which is further creating disorientation in society and culture of India.

The nature is not only our part, we owe to nature and greed of men to overutilise the natural resources with the monopoly is leading to the deterioration of the Ecology and environment. Women are always seen as unambitious and easy to be authorized but their emotional strength and treasuring quality is always underestimated by male dominant society. Patriarchy and demand of a legitimate son from the past has already weakened this strength in numbers. Further male child always became owner rather than female child which is classic bon verses sin to have as parents.

Coming to property rights, which are always given to son consists around 95% of father's property and girl child is given only movable assets of worth 5% only. This inequality makes them weak and detached from their homely land and on the other hand gave sons the right to own something, and then owner can do anything of it. So this idea of caring and nurturing does not comes to sons perpetually. And in past we have seen that how the owners of land were highly involved in wars, violence and aggression for the piece of land which they think is their property. But it is not.

Economically speaking there are harsh realities of this greed of Men. Like farmers suicides and their rate is increased commercialization of agriculture, bank debt, landlord debts etc. and obviously lack of government targeted initiatives. On the other hand female farmers in Uttarakhand are giving tough competition and great example also.

The idea of coming in global lime light is putting so much pressure as we are amongst the fastest growing economies of the world with growing population and problems like food security issues, malnutrition, soil degradation, etc. are hawking.

From the past failures of governments like Green Revolution covering HYVs, hybrid seeds, subsidies, fertilizers, pesticides etc. kind of trickle down efforts which are failed instead government must go for targeted region centric approach.

## **Ecofeminism through Feminism**

In conflict areas across the world, Women's movements have worked with the United Nations to rebuild the structures of peace and security, to rehabilitate and reconcile societies, to protect refugees and the internally displaced, to educate and raise awareness of human rights and the rule of law. Within the Organization itself, the integration of gender perspectives in peace and security areas has become a central strategy." By Kofi A Aannan.

The major issue with the societies is that they always want to balance things out on the basis of merit and division of labor. Here comes the role of gendered base rules played by civic humans. And in these roles women's character is on back foot as they are very rarely visible in public spheres to deliberate and discuss. From 1960s onwards we saw first generation of women scholarship seeking for their rights and putting forward some ideologies like Essentialism, it stands for compartmentalizing works of both genders. For instance, women had to play role of good and efficient housewives and men had to play role of "bread winner". Why I used winner here? Because this so called winning position took away all sorts of intellect rights from women and they lost their spirit of fighting. So, Essentialism brings back the idea of seeking set characteristics in society. Another Feminist theory, i.e., Stand point Feminism calls attention to the knowledge that women gain from their conditions and experiences also they are very common in girls and women. This focuses on experiences and exposure according to Marxist theory's claim that the work we do—that particular task in which we get engage—shapes what we know and how we behave. Thus, feminist standpoint theory is interested in skills and knowledge that are cultivated by typically female activities such as domestic work and caregiving. For example, feminist standpoint theorists claim that caring for others allows girls and women to develop knowledge of what others need and how to meet those needs. Basically it trains how a female should behave in society ideally.

With this perspective Feminist standpoint theory refuse the notion that knowledge is a straightforward outcome of essential characteristics of group members (for instance, an XX chromosomal structure or having ovaries). Instead, feminist standpoint theory emphasizes social ideologies (e.g., sexism and the gender roles it authorizes) that explain why girls and women are assigned to certain activities and why those activities are less valued than activities typically assigned to boys and men. Feminist standpoint hinges on realizing that the conditions and experiences common to girls and women are not natural, but are a result from social and cultural fixtures, which unintentionally and unknowingly commanding one group human being and loosening up the other group. Last but not the least Post Modern Feminism ideology outlook, where women are allowed to and speak their head. They are trying to break the shackles of previous ideologies and emerging with new notion. As the name suggest, the term coined to bury medieval thoughts and allowing women to engage with new subjects and question old traditions

on the basis of logic, rationality and reasoning. But this theory is also criticized because its lack of vision. It was seeking for equality, again equality this was huge disappointment.

## **The Arguments against Ecofeminism**

Keeping in mind Essentialism, Stand-point feminism and Post-Modern Feminism outlook- “Strategic Feminism” named new term can be took into consideration. As the prefix word is itself suggesting that it has to deal with something related to strategy or strategizing. Instead of forming new rules for human beings in the society, for instance , Smoking is injurious- it is equal for both and women, nobody will be spared or barred from punishment. Both are trying to harm environment. The word ‘Strategic’ here stands not for merit and division of labor; it is connected with women’s position, which will not be compared and analyzed on the basis of men of the society.

## **Findings and Conclusion**

My research question is associated with humanity that both fundamental beings of nature should be concerned of it as a living being not as opportunists. Because the opposite of patriarchy is matriarchy, and both kinds of extremes can demolish the nature and its nomenclature to help us. So the term Ecofeminism which should be standing for equality and equal concerns for nature and environment is the true spirit of society for sustainable development. And what is more important is to respect the nature and strength of women who have these qualities. This kind of social experiment is made successful by the Himalayan tribal women. I would like to explore it further in my work in India from the end of Colonial Period till introduction of Globalization. And how with race of Globalization the greed of superiority and exploitation of resources harmed our Environment.

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