

Ecofeminism: A New Approach to Sustainable Development

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Abstract—*Is Nature/Environment/Ecology a Feminist Issue? Is there any connection between women and nature? Is women's oppression linked with the unwarranted domination or exploitation of nature? A belief in fundamental value dualisms/hierarchies, such as reason versus emotion, mind versus body, culture versus nature, man versus woman, absolutism versus relativism, objectivity versus subjectivity, spirit versus matter, male versus female, and heaven versus earth; along with traditionally "feminine" values such as reciprocity, nurturing and cooperation, which are present both among women and in nature and finally linguistic expressions: Mother Earth, Virgin timber, Fertile soil and Barren land compel us to give a positive reply to above mentioned questions. But, who unite these two concepts together and why? Does the unification of "eco" and "feminism" make sense? Is there a need for this new approach? How it would be beneficial by bringing a feminist lens, and specifically an Ecofeminists perspective, to environment sustainability? Answering these questions is basically what Ecofeminism is about. Therefore the objective of my paper is to highlight the relevance of Ecofeminism to sustainable development of the environment. Further to emphasize the Ecofeminists view that it is the "logic of domination", in alliance with value-hierarchical thinking and value-dualisms that sustains and justifies the double domination of women and nature.*

The discussion is organized as follows: *At the outset, I will talk about emergence and nature of Ecofeminism along with the definition of ecology and feminism separately and then Ecofeminism as such. Secondly, I will highlight seven essential and fundamental principles of Ecofeminism and then will show how these principles are used to find solutions to some of the limitations of traditional approaches to environmental regulation. Then in next two sections, primarily I will discuss the eight connections between women and nature followed up by the environmental movements/protests initiated by women. And then finally sum up, by focusing that Ecofeminism in order to be more effective and to formulate holistic change is to incorporate it into law that is by giving Ecofeminism legal effect. It is hoped that present study will help to outline an Ecological revolution that would entail new gender relations between men and women and between humans and nature.*

Design/methodology/approach -*The paper will be analytical/logical in nature and the data for this study has been collected from the secondary sources, which includes books, magazines, journals, periodicals and different websites.*

Findings-. *In this paper I will try to address that curing the unhealthy system, rather than just patching it up, allows for a more sustainable future. Our dependence on a living Earth is something to rejoice rather than alarm. Depleting natural resources in a race to progress a country is not a sustainable practice.*

Research limitations/implications- *Theoretical research.*

Practical implications- *By probing into the arena wherein the subordination of women by men and the domination of nature by humans intersect, Ecofeminism can be part of the solution for environmental ethics to thrive.*

Originality/value-. *To put emphasis on "Live and let live" as a more influential ecological principle than "Either you or me".*

Keywords: *Ecology, Feminism, Ecofeminism, Ecocentrism, Anthropocentrism, Rationalism, Universalizability.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Life is a web, not a hierarchy; within its multiplicity it is essential to have both healthy ecosystems and healthy societies. We all are different, but no one difference is more vital than another's. Since our very differences are precious, all forms of oppressions are unhealthy. On a philosophical level this stand can be linked to the recognition of the intrinsic value/moral standing of nonhuman life (others), of aboriginal people (cultural survival), and of the integrity of minority cultures (as opposed to assimilation). Ecofeminists argue for something parallel, like granting rights to nature as a step to end the ecological crisis, it will not necessarily be the right first step for many communities. Because humans created the crisis through their actions, Ecofeminists argue that logically/rationally; the healing must come from human actions as well.

2. BASIC INSIGHT

These include the following: (a) an obligation to *rationalism*, the view that reason (or rationality) is not only the trademark of being human; it is what makes humans superior to nonhuman/others (animals and nature); (b) a conception of *humans* as rational agents who are competent enough of

abstract reasoning, engaging objective principles, and understanding or calculating the results of actions; (c) conceptions of both the ideal moral/ethical agent and the knower as *impartial*, *detached* and *unbiased*; (d) a belief in fundamental *dualisms*, such as reason versus emotion, mind versus body, culture versus nature, men versus women and giving superiority to reason-mind-culture-men over emotion-body-nature-women; (e) an assumption that there is an *ontological partition* between humans and nonhuman/others; (f) a belief that humans have intrinsic value (things-in-itself) and nonhumans/others (animals and nature) have only instrumental value (as a means) and (g) *universalizability* as a measure for assessing the truth of ethical and epistemological doctrine.

Many of these key features/insights of philosophy are challenged by Ecofeminists. When, where and how this occurs is addressed throughout the paper.

3. WHY ECOFEMINISM? WHY NOW?

As global warming continues to affect all corners of the planet, it is becoming more and more vital that our views of the environment and our relationship to the nature begin to evolve into something more holistic.

- Ecofeminism provides an extra alternative to ecological thinking and social organizing, while promising harmony among women.
- The Ecofeminists goal is the adoption of a new attitude towards nature, one that realizes the interconnection of humans and nature instead of treating nature as a reserve for satisfying human needs.
- For Ecofeminists, the domination of women and nature is basically embedded in ideology. In order to overcome this, one needs to restructure and reconceptualize the primary patriarchal values and structural relations of once culture and promote equality, non-dualism and non-hierarchical forms of organization to bring about new social forms.
- Ecofeminists have argued that without the incorporation of feminist concerns for multiplicity in general and gender equality in particular; most eco-friendly approaches are incomplete and may even threaten to intensify women's subordination.

Before venturing to delineate the pros and cons of the aforesaid Ecofeminists views, it is essential to put the discipline of "Ecofeminism" in the proper perspective.

4. EMERGENCE OF ECOFEMINISM

Ecofeminism emerged in the West as an outcome of the peaceful, feminist and ecological movements/protests of the late 1970s and the early 1980s. The French writer Françoise d'Eaubonne coined the term "Ecofeminism or Ecological

Feminism" in 1974. In 1976 it was further developed by Ynestra King and became a movement in 1980.

5. ECOFEMINISM: ECOLOGY+FEMINISM

Ecology is the study of the interdependence and interconnectedness of all living systems. Feminism is a movement/struggle striving for the political, social, and educational equality of women with men. Ecology is anxious about that human activity is destroying the viability of the global ecosystem. Feminism is worried with the way in which women in general have been subordinated to men in general. Ecofeminism argues that the two are connected. As its name implies, Ecofeminism brings together the insights of feminism and ecology. Ecofeminism can be defined as a value system, a social movement, an awareness and a practice that also offers a political analysis that explores the links between anthropocentrism (human-centered) and environmental destruction.

6. TRAITS OF ECOFEMINISM

As its core there are seven fundamental principles of Ecofeminism.

- It is Ecocentric (nature-centered) and values humans' dependence on Earth.
- It seeks the end of patriarchy and links it to all forms of domination.
- It is inclusive of diverse experiences and opinions, both of women, men and nature.
- It place value on the 'local.' It seeks to tackle environmental degradation and exploitation using specialized solutions relevant to the community in question.
- It incorporates ethics/morals into all the discussion about humans and the Earth.
- It states that male custody of land has led to a dominator culture (patriarchal).
- It demonstrates the way gender and other forms of oppression are deeply implicated in the ecological crisis.

7. EIGHT CONNECTIONS BETWEEN WOMEN AND NATURE

7.1 Historical (causal) connections.

Struggle against patriarchal culture and its consequences: deprivation, discrimination and humiliation have a prolonged history. Moreover, to generate theories concerning the sources of the exploitation of women and nature historical data are always used.

7.2 Conceptual Connections.

The assertion is that conceptual structures identify women with femininity, the body, Earth, sexuality and emotion: and men with masculinity, spirit, mind and power. Dualisms such as reason/emotion, culture/nature, mind/body, heaven/Earth, and man/woman converge, giving priority to first as compare to second of the opposite pair.

7.3 Empirical and Experiential Connections

Empirical evidences linking women with nature are reproducing, nurturing, caring and feeding values that are present in both.

7.4 Symbolic Connections.

Symbolic connections between women and nature are visible in art, theology, religion and literature. For example, Gaia is the substitute religious symbol depicted in the form of a woman. On the other hand, linguistic expressions like Mother Earth, Virgin timber, Fertile soil and Barren land shows relatedness between women and nature.

7.5 Epistemological Connections.

The epistemological connection is the outcome of the theoretical connections between women and nature, moreover because women are most directly/adversely affected by environmental crisis and generally associated with nature, they are in an epistemological privileged position. This means women are in a position to sustain the creation of practical and intellectual ecological paradigms.

7.6 Political (Praxis) Connections

When the term “Ecofeminism” was first time coined by Francoise d’Eaubonne in 1974 in order to emphasize women’s capability for ecological rebellion, Ecofeminism has become a classical political movement with a specific background but has the same basis as feminism, in general, or ecology itself, when seen from another angle.

7.7 Ethical Connections.

Ecofeminism is a section of environmental ethics, in the same manner as deep ecology, ecotheology and many others ecologically inspired philosophical or ethical standpoints. Ethics of care and reciprocity are the outcome of ethical connections between women and nature.

7.8 Theoretical Connections.

This kind of connection between women and nature is firmly linked to ethical connections.

We must say that this list of possible interconnectedness between women and nature is not complete. There may be some connections that could include two or even more of the above listed connections as well.

8. ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENTS/PROTEST

Initiated by Women

Movements/protests all over the world that are devoted to the persistence of life on earth, like the Chipko movement in India, Love canal in New York and The Green Belt movement in Kenya, are all labeled as “Ecofeminists” movements. As these movements are initiated and inspired by women. Moreover these movements highlight the significance and relevance of women in environmental revolution and the connection between women and nature, as well as the domination and oppression of both on the basis of sex, race and class.

9. GIVING ECOFEMINISM LEGAL EFFECT

A powerful way for Ecofeminists theory to formulate change is to incorporate it into law. Law can influence the relationship between humans and nature by refining and codifying particular strands of the nature/culture narrative. The law may guide/dictates its citizens where nature and culture intersect. For law to serve as a vehicle for social change, legal institutions must be persuaded that they will be more just if they embody the experiences of a diverse group of people. Moreover, utilizing women’s experiences as well as men’s would produce a superior and more inclusive model for legal decision-making.

The law has much to gain from an Ecofeminist perspective. Ecofeminists shape laws from a framework of domination to a framework of resistance.

For the law to shift, a major task is to position ecofeminist and ecocentric ideas and values into the collective mind stream of the decision maker. To create change, laws must be revised to provide remedies for environmental injustice. The first step in bringing change was to recognize the flaws, and offer examples of solutions. There is an apparent necessity in environmental regulation to include ethics/morals, to generate environmental justice specific legislation, to listen to the plights of those most affected by environmental degradation, create exclusive, local remedies, and to open a discourse between effected communities and future developments. These five are just an example of the prospective for ecofeminism. There are many more solutions to be found and advocates of environmental justice should continue to investigate other potentially useful legal strategies.

10. MEASURES

- Anthropocentrism should be replaced by Ecocentrism; the view that humans are both part of, and a partner with, nature.
- The so called struggle of life, and survival of the fittest, should be taken in the sense of ability to coexist and

cooperate in multifaceted relationships, rather than ability to kill, exploit, and suppress.

- There should be a formation of ecologically and ethically appropriate relationship between human beings and the natural world.
- Ecofeminists ideas should be spread through education and activism at the grassroots level.
- There must be an urge for men and women to become eco-citizens who then create ecological cities in particular and eco-planet in general.

11. CONCLUSION

After this brief outline, we can say that Ecofeminism brings new energy and a bit fresh, different view on environmental crisis and their remedies. Ecofeminism, with its specific, although sometimes different approaches emphasized what is important: giving the true importance to the roles of women and nature. That is the main reason for further development of this ethical conception and also for its implementation in the real life solutions. Not all of Ecofeminists principles and methods need to be used all the time to make a difference. But, as this theory spreads and gains momentum, people will begin to change the way they think about nature, and will be focused towards environmental sustainability and social justice.

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