

Ecofeminism: Analyses Through Selected Ramo Folk Literature

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, an attempt has been made to understand the ecofeminism elements in the selected Ramo folk literature. These are; *Abotani and Frog*, *I Am a Lady*, *Bride* and *Dongyi Yayi's Transformation into Sun Ray*. Ecofeminism interrogate the problems that women and nature face in an age of indifference and exploitation, and encourages human being to be concerned. Ecofeminism considers that there is a similarity between nature and women that originates from their mutual history of domination by a patriarchal society. Ramos are one of the sub tribes of Adi community, inhabiting in the valley of Siyum river in the Mechukha sub-division Shi Yomi District, Arunachal Pradesh. Since generation, the status of women has been everyone's focus of attention in all the society. Women play vital role in the progress of the society, yet the identity of Ramo women is still to evolve. To explore the status and role of Ramo women is so important because women signifies as mother, wives, daughters, sisters, and as the preservers of the cultural customs and traditions of society.

Keywords: *Ecofeminism, Ramo women, Ramo culture, Ramo folktales, Ramo folksongs.*

Introduction

The term ecofeminism was coined by French Feminist Françoise D'Eaubonne in 1974 (*Nature, Culture and Gender* (2016)). Ecofeminism stresses the interconnectedness of all life. Ecofeminists claim that the domination of nature and domination of women are parallel in many ways if not totally alike. They feel that humans control nature and men control women. Nature has always been understood as feminine terms, because of her gentleness, kindness, helpfulness, fertility and generosity in nourishment. Nature is portrayed in motherly positions in many cultures and languages. Besides, woman is measured closer to nature than man because both share the pains of birthing and nurturing. The ecofeminists, analyze these equivalents, and realize the means of weakening of both nature and women.

In the book *Nature, Culture and Gender* (2016)

“Ecofeminism is defined as a holistic belief system that emphasizes care and concern for Mother Earth, reverence for the intrinsic value of all life forms and recognition of the interdependence of living and nonliving beings on this earth” (Porselvi, 2).

In this perspective, the folktale *Abotani and Frog* exemplifies the ecofeminism elements.

***Abotani and Frog* (Abotani Hologa Tatic)**

Millions of years ago, the mother earth gave birth to plants, insects, animals, the human being Abotani and Ame Tahor. Abotani and Ame Tahor were supernatural creatures. Ame Tahor was the first female, and Abotani was the first male being on the earth. Abotani had tried fatherhood

with many creatures on earth but did not bear any successor. Later he married a frog. But she failed to conceive and live up to his expectation. Abotani used to dominate and imposed his opinion on her. She was a dutiful wife, but she always used to eat the left-over half-burnt food which Abotani did not like. So due to anger, Abotani pushed her into the fire. The frog was brutally burnt. Abotani's marriage with the frog was not successful (Collected and translated by Dr. Nasi Koje).

Moral: The moral of the story is that one should learn to control their anger.

Ecofeminism Perspective: The above given tale picturizes the patriarchal images of the Ramo society. The birth of Abotani, Ame Tahor, insects, animals and plants by mother earth infers the profound connection between the human and non-human creatures. The failed marriage of Abotani with a Frog portrays male domination over women in within the Ramo society. Frog symbolizes both nature and woman, who have been the object of subjugation. Abotani married a Frog for his mean aim to be a father. But when a Frog could not be a mother, and live up to his expectation Abotani pushed him inside the fire. The very idea of Frog being dutiful wife indicates the patriarchal aspects of inferiority of female in the society. The exploitation of the frog is parallel to the exploitation of nature and women in the society. The tale gives Ecofeministic outlook in every possible way.

According to ecofeminist Dr. Vandana Shiva prestigious Sydney Peace Prize awardee 2010 for her commitment to environmental justice statement;

“Nature, both animate and inanimate is thus an expression of Shakthi, the feminine and creative principle of cosmos: in conjunction with the masculine principle (Purusha), Prakriti creates the world” (Porselvi, 2).

In this context the Ramo folksong *I am a Lady* personifies ecofeminism essentials.

***I Am a Lady* (Ngo Nyemeng Go)**

I am a lady,

I have big-big burden,

I do dishes,

I take care of the children,

I am the lady of the house.

I am a lady,

I go to field,

I sow, I weed, I harvest,

I gather vegetables,

I am the lady of the house.

I am a lady,

I depend on him,

I can't inherit,

I have no voice,

But I am the lady of the house (Collected and translated by Dr. Nasi Koje).

Ecofeminism Perspective: The above given folksong replicates the features of ecofeminism approach. The idea of prakriti motives and gives positives energy for the betterment of nature, women, children and men. As depicted in the poem, Ramo women symbolizes as a caretaker, mother, and the lady of the house. Traditionally Ramo womenfolk is associated with nature in the form of agriculture, household chores, taking care of the domestic animals etc. They are actively involved in preparing meal, beer, to look after their children, their health, education etc. Women, normally work from sunrise to sunset. The workload of married women is more than menfolk, especially after their marriage as women tend to take the responsibilities indoor as well as outdoor activities. In the Ramo society women are economically dependent on men. In the Ramo society women have neither voice or nor choice. Thus, the folksong details the suppression of women and nature within the Ramo society.

Noel Sturgeon projects five different types of aspects to understand the relationship between nature and women.

They are characterized by various positions: first, nature-nurture proposition; second, binary opposition of man/culture versus woman/nature; third, women in the household and their environmental problems; fourth, women's proximity with natural cycles; and finally, women personified as goddesses of nature (Porselvi. 11).

In this outlook the Ramo folksong *Bride* expresses ecofeminist rudiments.

***Bride* (Nyamney)**

Clap-clap for new bride,

Clap-clap daughter of Ramgo family,

Clap-clap bridegroom of Dungram family,

Clap-clap he is blown away with her smile and beauty.

Clap-clap bridegroom examined her character,

Clap-clap he used chicken liver to examine,

Clap-clap the chicken liver test is positive.

Clap-clap lets welcome the new bride,

Clap-clap she is expected to be a good wife,

Clap-clap she is expected to be a good daughter-in-law,

Clap-clap she is expected to be a good mother,

Clap-clap that's the burden of bride (Collected and translated by Dr. Nasi Koje).

Ecofeminism Perspective: The given folksong uncovers parallel between the nature and women. The suitability of lady as wife is tested through the chicken liver which shows the inferiority of the women. Testing the possibilities of the union of the two soul is shown through the chicken liver is the reflection that nature influence in their simple act as well as their bigger decision making. It brings out the social expectation from women. Like, they anticipate to be good character, obedient daughter, good wife, good daughter-in-law, and good mother. Similarly, human also expect a lot from nature. Such as fruits, vegetables, shelters etc. In the past girls were not allowed to talk about their marriage. Basically, women did not have any choice.

As mentioned in the book *Nature, Culture and Gender* (2016), there are five crucial ideologies of ecofeminist, and they are:

- (a) It deems the worth of woman-nature relationships on the one hand and nature-culture connection on the other.
- (b) It recognizes the interconnectedness between women, nature,

and another marginalized group. (c) It asserts the rights of Mother Earth and all her oppressed children and guides human beings to understand the benefits of establishing gender equity and sustainable development. (d) It inspires human minds to realize the spiritual elements in all living creatures. (e) It interrogates the problems that human and nature face in an age of exploitation, destruction and indifference and motivates human beings to integrate their collective strength (Porselvi 2).

In this milieu the Ramo folktale *Dongyi Yayi's Transformation into Sun Ray* embodies ecofeminist elements.

Dongyi Yayi's Transformation into Sun Ray (Dongyi Yayi Holoka Donyi)

Long ago, Dongyi Yayi with her twin son was very unhappy because her husband Abotani did not return from the forest. She waited him for many years. So, she decided to go back to her parent's house. She was sorrowful and sad at home. So, she asked her sons to bring water from the stream. She stood near the fireplace. The boys asked mother "What are you doing?" She replied, "I am repairing your father's fireplace made up of metal". She ordered the boys to bring water for the second time standing beside square shape rack for storing foods and firewood. The boys again asked their mother "What are you doing now"? She replied, "I am maintaining your father's rack made up of expensive swords". The third time she asked to fetch water standing nearby by the basement. The boys asked mother "What you are doing now"? She replied, "I am repairing the basement of your father's house made up of swords". She told the boys to continue fetching water from the stream. They found their mother in the ceiling. They asked mother

“What are you doing now?” she replied, “I am renovating your father’s silver ceiling”. Again, she ordered her son to bring water from the stream. They went and arrived home with water. They found their mother at the roof of the house. They asked mother “What are you doing now?” She replied “I am maintaining your father’s golden roof.” Again, she ordered her sons to bring water from the stream. They went and came back with water at home. This time they found their mother within the rays of the sun (Collected and translated by Dr. Nasi Koje).

Moral: This tale educates the children the idea of being obedient to their parents.

Ecofeminism Perspective: *Dongyi Yayi’s Transformation into Sunray* noticeably shows the ecofeminism elements. Ecofeminist claims the similarities between nature and women. Dongyi Yayi symbolize both nature and women. It has been analyzed that Dongyi Yayi is treated as equal to the sunray. Women are considered as the giver of love, fertility, hope, beauty etc. Similarly, in the Ramo culture sun is treated as motherly figure. It is sunray which give energy, light, life etc. For example, in the tale Dogyi repaired everything that was associated with his husband Abotani. She fixed the fire place, rack, basement, silver ceiling and golden roof of her husband. Everything she repaired are part of nature. The idea of repairing is the reflection of self-healing, because she has been waiting her husband Abotani for many years, who never turned back. She suffered, cried and raised her twin son all alone. The repairing is also an indication of the acceptance, compromise, and strong sides of women. Thus, her transformation into sunray is an ultimate contemplation of ecofeminism. Because it confirms the parallel sides of women and sunray.

Therefore, in conclusion through the analysis it has been discovered that the Ramo folk literature stretches greater seriousness, scope and energy to the study of ecofeminism. Ramo culture and their folk literature happen in nature. It has been revealed that both nature and women are parallel to each other. Both nature and women are alive and lifeless, power and feminine, creative, mutually unite together and create the world.

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