

Tracing the history of Eco-feminist perspectives in Indian Fiction

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Abstract

This research will be tracing at the works of Toru Dutt, Tamsüla Ao, Mamang Dai, Kamala Markandaya and others to bring out many debates that are only possible through an eco-feminist perspective in fiction. Tamsüla Ao's short story collection, *Laburnum for my head* is a promising book that speaks the same language as the kind of Toru Dutt. She shares her melancholia and her joys with nature, becoming at one with it. Toru Dutt's *Our Casuarina Tree* is a potent poem, a lament for the tree and for a world devoid of memories to hold on to. Toru Dutt's oeuvre takes from the romantics as she tries to give the same romantic preoccupation with the "sublime" and "beautiful" an Indian twist with her famous poems like *The Lotus* and *Baugmaree*. Through these texts, I would like to bring out the ecological and feminist perspectives that underly Indian diction. Toru Dutt and Tamsüla Ao belong to different worlds and yet the brief passage in time that remains between the two of them has shown a significant change in how feminist writers look at the world. This research would be looking at the works of writers like Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar (*The mysterious ailment of Rupi Baskey*, *The Adivasi will not dance*) and Mamang Dai (*The Black Hill*) to trace the historical contexts and socio-political movements that have propelled the rise of ecofeminist fiction in India. Through this study, there is to create a genealogy for Indian feminists that shall bring out the unique and extremely diverse possibilities of an ecological fiction in our literature.

Keywords: Feminism, Indian Fiction, Ecology, Nature, Eco-feminism, Eco-criticism.

Introduction

Background and Context

A lot of writing that women have contributed to and championed over the years deals with the intricacies of Nature and women, a connection that is often overlooked by the greatest of scholars. A conversation about nature in its most naked sense has enabled conversations around gender, race, class and caste where modernity has found sound criticism. These ecofeminist writers have found a window into the vast ever expanding modernist world to reveal to us all that we left behind in our desperation to "proser". Indian ecofeminism has found a resilient voice in how the world subjugated "Nature"/ "women" as the Other. It is of course impossible to discuss ecofeminism as a monolith, especially in the Indian context as voices from across generations and class/caste barriers have found suitable metaphors from the varying surroundings of the country. It is thus essential to trace a Foucauldian genealogy of sorts that can find the unique impulses of Indian ecofeminism. These texts follow writing from early nineteenth century to present day contemporary voices and one can see a drastic change in how the Indian ecofeminism came to eventually move out of an elitist romantic thought to a struggle for identity and its assertion. The relationship of women authors to nature has changed with looming questions of climate change and the fearful technological revolution that has taken at the cost of nature. This paper would like to explore how women's writing has always occupied this rebellious territory of oneness with nature and incorporated it into their writing.

Problem Statement

This study will be looking at the works of Toru Dutt, Tamsūla Ao, Mamang Dai, Kamala Markandaya and others to bring out the many debates that are only possible through ecofeminist perspective in fiction. Tamsūla Ao's short story collection, *Laburnum for my head* is a promising book that speaks the same language as the kind of Toru Dutt. She shares her melancholia and her joys with Nature, becoming at one with it. Toru Dutt's *Our Casuarina Tree* is a patent poem, a lament for the tree and for a world devoid of memories to hold on to. Toru Dutt's oeuvre takes from the romantics as she tries to give the same romantic preoccupation with the "sublime" and "beautiful" an Indian twist with her famous poems like "The Lotus" and "Baugmaree". Kamala Markandaya's *Nectar in A Sieve* is an illustration of how life without hope, hope in its entire social and political sense, is incomplete regardless of the effort we put. The story takes the metaphor of nectar in a sieve to describe the hardships faced by the protagonist Rukmani, who is a farmer is forced into poverty with the arrival of modern agents like the Tannery. She finds joy in nature but the same becomes oppressive for because of the lack of resources. The book is a scathing critique of how the tanneries and market places that were initiated by white men and upper caste compradors from India led to the extreme poverty of many families like that of Rukmani's.

Through these texts, I would like bring out the ecological and feminist perspectives that underly Indian fiction. Toru Dutt and Tamsūla Ao belong to different worlds and yet the brief passage in time that remains between the two of them has shown a significant change in how feminist writers look at the world. I would be looking at the works of writers like Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar (The mysterious ailment of Rupi Baskey, *The Adivasi will not dance*) and Mamang Dai (*The Black Hill*) to trace the historical contexts and socio-political movements that have propelled the rise of ecofeminist fiction in India. Through this study, it

can be possible to create a genealogy for Indian feminists that shall bring out the unique and extremely diverse possibilities of ecological fiction in our literature.

Objectives of the Research:

- The main aim and objective of my present study is to analyse and interpret a drastic change in how the Indian eco-feminism eventually move out of an elitist romantic thought to a struggle for identity and its assertion.
- This research would like to explore how women's writings has always occupied this rebellious territory of oneness with Nature and incorporated it into their writing.
- This research will focus on the contemporary literary fiction and bring them into a discussion with the literary fiction from the past and from across the world, in relation with women and Nature. Women across the globe are finding solidarity by questioning this unnatural exploitative tendency of the commercial fiction and globalisation, which ultimately results in the exploitation and destruction of women and Nature.
- This study helps to establish the relationship between women and Nature.
- This study shows that women and Nature both are nurturer and a source to give not to destruct.

Research Questions

There are some pertinent questions that I would like through a quantitative and qualitative analysis of Nature in the writing of women-

1. Is there an "essentialist" connection between nature and women?
2. Can this connection be uniform and equal for women of all social strata or do the modes of connection change with women from different class, caste and race?
3. Is there a "purer" third world that knows and celebrates nature more than the rest of the world?
4. Do men contribute to ecofeminism in Indian literary tropes?
5. Can we see a critique of modernity in Indian Ecofeminism?

Relevance and Importance of the Study

There is a big gap between ecological and feminist perspectives in Indian literary criticism. In a country where the successful continue to exist at the cost of exploitation and neglect of many, ecological exploitation becomes the norm. Most often, it is the women from these margins that experience the worst from neglect. They fail to find representation in public policy and art remains a distant dream when the language, criticism and art consumption continues to be alienating. It is thus there has been a surge in feminist fiction writers that have taken to the literary form to express their dissonance from the world. (They have expressed themselves as the wrath of nature and also as the abundance of nature) Ecological feminism is thus one of the most rewarding approaches to reading fiction today. The study would also like to focus on contemporary literary fiction and bring them into a discussion with literary fiction from the past and from across the world. Women across the globe are finding solidarity by questioning this unnatural exploitative tendency of the market and commercial fiction. Seeing them come together and tell us their metaphors that have the ability to save the world is a delight.

Literature Review

The literature review summarizes, compares and critiques the most relevant scholarly sources on the topic. There are many different ways to structure a literature review, but it should explore:

1. Key Concepts, Theories and Studies

1.1. Ecological Perspectives in India

1.1.1. M. Gagdil, R. Guha

In their book, 'This Fissured land: a history of ecology of India', these writers try to create a brief history of how India's ecology and ecological practices came to be. They begin by describing the four modes of resource use- them being gathering, shifting cultivation, nomadic pastoralism, settled cultivation and eventually the industrial society. For them these modes are distinguished through the use and availability of technology, economy of the country, social organisations and ideological impact on ecology. They establish that these multiplicities can cause conflict with the modes in which resources can be divided and so they can be referred to when dealing with an ecological conundrum that is specific to India. The first big theoretical intervention they make in this text and subsequently in other works of writing is that the process of replacing our early hunter-gatherer societies with an extensively agricultural one was the first kind of environmental crisis that our region faced (circa 400 B.C.E). This led to what they call the village-level conservation system. They circle back to texts from the Buddhist and Jain dominant time periods as being the forebearers of such a society. According to them non-violence, vegetarianism and mixed agriculture (the domestication of animals for cattle alongside farming) are the ways of ecological organisation that evolved in India and continue to be very dominant.

They trace India's ecological history within the colonial context as well. They suggest that we had very essential ecologically relevant transitions during and after the British colonial rule as well. They suggest that colonial forest exploitation practices, favoured by the likes of Baden-Powell led to a disruption in the village-level conservation system that India had always been practicing. They also highlight that many timely interventions were suggested, like Dietrich Brandis' recommendations for a centralised conservation strategy for sustainable existence but these were not implemented. The book demonstrates with careful study how this along with several other administrative failures had led to the depletion of our resources. They assert that state forestry is far inferior as a technique to village and social forestry modes when discussing the best way to practice sustainable living.

1.1.2. Mary, Fatima K

Fatima concludes that despite being more than fifty percent of the rural population that contributes in farming and food production, rural women continue to be the most disadvantaged population. They are frequently underestimated and overlooked by policy makers and developers. Prejudice against them is widespread due to various reasons, caste being among the most important. They thus continue to be in subjugated positions. Fatima asserts that farmers continue to be assumed the male policy-creators, development planners and agricultural service providers. The problem at hand is that the ramifications of this social discrimination manifest itself in the lack of access to essential resources like land, money credit, agricultural equipment, technology and other trainings that could perhaps augment their productivity. All surveys and reports unabashedly claim that the women continue to

contribute more, if not equally in food and agricultural and yet their remains such a void in the power they hold.

When it comes to ecological destruction, women are affected more than men. Their livelihoods depend on these resources like forests and the loss of these resources can cause a social tragedy for them when it continues to only be an "environmental tragedy" for urban onlookers. These tragedies can manifest in various forms and data has demonstrated time and again, the men continue to be the first to receive monetary and healthcare aid in times of need, Fatima observes. This leads to them being physically weaker and mal-nourished as well when compared to the men of their own families and socio-economic strata.

Mixed agriculture is a way of living in India. Animal husbandry (a misogynist term itself, one can imagine it to be equally harmful in praxis as well), is a common practice across rural farmlands. These activities can often range from grazing, collecting fodder, cleaning animal sheds and taking care of them, and most of these feeding and cleaning processes are done primarily done by the women of the families. Fatima concludes that women can be accounted for more than 93 percent of the total employment that goes in dairy production India. Processes like dung composting and carrying the produced compost to the field continues to be the designated tasks for women, one of the most essential processes in farming. They are also responsible for the cooking fuel that is produced (another effective sustainable practice that is rural and championed by women alone) by putting dung and twigs together. The ultimate crisis is that despite such active participation, women hold less than 14 percent of the corporate posts in agriculture, giving them next to no power when standing opposed to the patriarchal practices and mindsets of the dominant majority.

1.2 Ecofeminist approaches

1.2.1 Vandana Shiva

Shiva's *Ecofeminism* is a collection of twenty essays which are deliberations on a new kind of feminist ecocriticism. The collection in a way summarises her work so far as many of the writings have already been published but reading them together can help me understand the historical narratives that are dominant in Indian ecofeminism. The books have been peer-reviewed and discussed at length around the world, giving Indian ecofeminism a voice unlike before. She co-wrote the book with Maria Mies who is previously known for her text, *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale*. Shiva has also received a lot of critical acclaim for her book *Staying Alive* which she co-wrote with the legendary Margaret Atwood. The most essential point that both Mies and Shiva are trying to establish in the book *Ecofeminism* is that there is a necessity to critique modern science as we know it. They assert that "modern science" is definitely linked to material relations coming from the patriarchal violence of colonialism and capitalism across the world. Modern science for them is a tool that has allowed scientific rationality upon inherently violent and irrational ways of being like colonialism and capitalism. It is this widely celebrated rational and masculine scientific rationality that has led to what they call the curse of accumulation. What is progress in science automatically becomes 'growth' in capitalism. They observe that everything we know as 'scientific epistemology' and 'scientific pragmatism' has historically been violently corroding the relations between the industrialised and underdeveloped nations. They conclude by asserting the ultimate consequence of such a destructive relationship has always fallen upon women and children, best constituted as a part of the "Nature" that they would exploit for "growth".

They also comment on up-and-coming ideas of identity politics (in context of those ideas that are in discourse outside any sort of ecological solidarity) as being a culturally relativist phenomenon. This what they call "feminist theory of difference" seems to be an indulgence that ignores the "fragmentation and homogenization of local cultures" caused by capitalism.

For them all notions of development evolve from the primary notion of "science" which is a western and colonizing endeavour. For them development is like this notion of science for it can embody the patriarchy and masculinist ways of being when dealing with women and nature. For Shiva and Meis, the indigenous people of the so-called third world are the first to suffer under these projects because development is always at the cost of their existing livelihoods and ways of being, by extension also nature. For Shiva, they are the people that best understand possess values that are inherently anti-capitalist and anti-western. Shiva concludes by asserting that protecting nature for the rural and indigenous population is protecting womanhood itself, making sustainability a way of surviving for them. Shiva ardently believes and often reiterates in all her writings that women shall always have a special association with biodiversity. For her they are the custodians of what she calls "Earth-health" and it is through the unseen knowledge of women that we can imagine a heterogenous and fulfilling life. For her women are directly linked with any kind of subsistence work in India and thus they can save natural resources better than anyone else. Shiva observes that since time immemorial, women having been working across "sectors" of knowledge production as they are multi- taskers. It is their intersectional way of living which has sustained the Earth so far, she says.

1.2.2. Aruna Gnanadson

She one of the most prominent figures in Christian ecofeminist theology, a position she was able to establish through her works *Listen to the Women! Listen to the Earth!* She wrote the text as an ode to the struggles of the Deomali women from Koraput in Odisha. She wrote about the spiritual resources they found in their struggle against caste and class struggle in our deeply divided society. She has since claimed that it is the stories of women like the Deomali women that gave her a window into the possibilities of religion and ecofeminism in our society today.

She suggests that for many women in the "third world", existence comes after survival, something which is possible through spiritual hermeneutic texts. She observes that women that come from the third world nations like Kenya, Brazil and India continue to bear the worst of environmental degradation in the world. She believes that only an ecofeminist perspective can help in the widespread circulation of ideas and knowledge of the poor women, Dalit women and indigenous women of the country who have been systematically oppressed for centuries. Her opinion is that a theological discourse from their viewpoint has also been denied to the world and hence a theological ecofeminist perspective is wholesome in the context of India. She believes that such a discourse can elaborate the ways of 'prudent care' with which women like the Deomali women have been saving the Earth and the planet time and again. Like Gadgil and Guha had suggested, India has a sustainable existence that was comfortable with prudent use of resources before the arrival of colonizers. She elaborates on this term and adds her phrase "prudent care" to it in order to specify the contribution of Dalit women and oppressed women of the country in this culture of sustainability and oneness with Nature. The notion of care comes from the Christian feminist idea of the "ethics of care" where women must reclaim the burden of preservation and tradition, Gnanadson believes that Christian values can help reduce the exploitative impulses of capitalism.

She studied environmental racism in the national study that was conducted by the United Church of Christ Commission for Racial Studies in Washington, U.S.A. She observed that global minorities were more likely to become "hazardous waste facilities" of the world. She also noted that further on, the desire for sustainability in the first world has also propelled them to dump their garbage upon the powerless and poor indigenous communities that have been racially oppressed as well. She tries to bring together an international ecofeminist solidarity of sorts when she notes that similar instances are also rampant in India and the Ogoni peoples of Nigeria, U'wa people of Columbia and Amungme of West Papua- all who continue to suffer for the development of the first world.

1.2.3. Global Approaches to Ecofeminism

Ecofeminism was a neologism that French writer Francoise d'Eaubonne was apparently the first to use around 1974, in her seminal text, 'L'e Feminisme Ou la Mort'. She spoke in the rhythm of the abolitionists and activists of the 60s and asked all women of the world to come together and save the planet. She was among the first to theoretically assert that women and nature, both continue to be among the exploited at the hands of patriarchy. She observes through her historical reading that the arrival of modern technology brought with it patriarchy as we know it because of the shift from dry to irrigated systems of cultivation. She concludes, with critics have argued against by calling it an essentialist argument, that with the eventual mastery over fertility and the beginning of the exhaustion of all resources, came systemic and structural patriarchy. She divides the gender spectrum into those who create, give life, nurture and preserve life and the others being exploitative and destructive. In her Marxist analysis she reiterates that a balance between these kinds of gender expressions is the closest possible solution to the balance between our production and consumption of goods that are extracted out of Nature.

This idea emerges again in the *Silent Spring* of Carson where technological progress is brought under the radar once again. The destruction caused to the environment via technology is questioned because of the use of toxic chemicals in farms and wildlife leading to rampant loss of life. The argument is a simple and undeniable one, that we humans and Nature are one and the same, the destruction of one is bound to cause the destruction of the other. We must bind ourselves to a natural contract and not just a social contract to limit the extent to which we can borrow from the Cornucopia of natural abundance.

Mary Daly is a radical lesbian feminist who asserted her ecofeminist ideals through her work where she stated the most obvious yet obscure fact, a man's connection with culture will always be deemed superior to a woman's connection with nature. She calls for a coming together of women to reclaim these myths that mean to demonise women. In her work, she implores us from not assuming that anyone other than a woman is incapable of bonding with nature in the prudent sense

Wangari Maathai started the revolutionary Green Belt movement which has come to epitomised the African commitment to ecofeminism. She represents the need for collective activism and is also the first environmentalist to ever receive the Nobel Peace Prize for her work. Lilian Cheelo Siwila asserts that ecofeminism has strong African roots because of the matrilineal context that several of its proponents belong to. For her, feminist spirituality and the oneness with nature through indigenous knowledge was possible because of the presence of grandmothers and mothers in decisive roles in the family. She recalls the names of

prominent African feminist scholars like Phiri, Chirongoma and Rakoczy, who have spoken of the interconnectedness between humanity, nature and spirituality.

1.3 Toru Dutt

Toru Dutt comes from the nineteenth century and wrote with a romantic zeal. Her preoccupation with Nature was definitely ecocritical but came much before the ecofeminist approaches of the twenty first century. She was writing the like romantics, has also been likened to John Keats, her criticism emerges when tries to place India or rather what the west called "the Orient" into the English and French language. In her works she attributed India's beauty and nature as full of the sublime and the beautiful as the romantics understood it and she was among the first to understand the colonial shades of aesthetic appreciation that India would continue to be shackled by even today.

Both ecocriticism and romanticism try to establish a relationship between the human consciousness as we know and Nature as we experience it. Romanticism rather dwells on the structures of consciousness within us that express our feelings and get us to act in a certain way. Ecocriticism picks up from this impulse in Literature and tries to understand how women and other marginalized sections of the society face the social and political ramifications of these "structures of consciousness" that continue to cater the sensibilities of only one kind of people in such a heterogenous world. Toru Dutt was definitely overwhelmed with these questions as is resplendent in her poems like '*The Lotus*', '*Our Casuarina Tree*' and '*Baugmaree*'.

Ecocritics have also tried to find an aesthetic way of understanding the ecology, in order to evoke sympathy for a world we keep destroying. This can be best seen in the eco-poetics of Toru Dutt's poetry. The Lotus' is considered perhaps her most "patriotic" attempt, where she likens the lotus to be the "queenliest flower", the best out of the more western flowers like the rose and the lily. This poem reads like a fairy tale and reveals to us Dutt's exquisite sensitivity in writing and her ability to externalise the most vulnerable and self-occupied emotions in writing, only and only through her reliance on nature: Her poem, '*Our Casuarina Tree*' is perhaps her most famous piece of writing. The tree and all of nature that encompasses her comes to take the shape of memories and old scars from the loss of her beloved elder sister. The tree becomes the emblem of all of time for us readers for the writing and the allusions to nature continue to be fresh and very soothing. The tree is at once personified and made a metaphor as well, for it can feel the sharp and acute pain in her heart but at the same time its trunk and branches can also resemble a python crawling upwards, to reach the stars. The tree becomes an extension of her melancholy and the sea becomes the measure of time and distance between her and her loved ones back home in India as she writes of home from abroad. The entire poem builds for us the ecology of India from her memories. It captures her affection towards the tree and love for her family, childhood.

In her poem '*Baugmaree*', she captures the beauty of the garden, a colonial preoccupation. She takes from traditions of "sensibility" writing and adds a certain sentimentality to what she perceives through the senses. In her poetry and especially through poems like '*Baugmaree*' she is able to express through her writing the outer flora and fauna around her, associating them with her own personhood, a feminist position that many ecofeminists have taken today. She seems to accomplish what remains art's objective, to capture our full consciousness. In my research I would attempt to show how such a personal and confessional use of ecological imagery and association with nature in fiction can enhance the pool of metaphors and

expressions that have been predominantly "feminine", thus more accessible for solidarity among women since the beginning of it all.

1.4 Temsula Ao

Mark Bender, in his text, 'Ethnographic Poetry in North-East India and Southwest China' explains the usage of oral traditions and other specific themes unique in the poetry of the region. He calls the poetry from North-East India a repository of history and tradition for the modes of ethnography that they come with. He observes that a lot of the poetry is resplendent with tangible images (clothing, food, tools, body, livestock, art etc.), images from intangible parts of culture- their songs, rituals, epics, myths, languages etc, the images that come from observing "folk" practices that are a part of their very ways of living- (pottery, weaving, farming, ritualists etc.), folk ideas, their flora and fauna, stories of ghosts and the supernatural world, heroes and famous folk from their communities and lastly the stories of their origin and where they migrated from.

Temsula Ao belongs to Nagaland and has taken to many images from her surroundings and life in her fiction, augmenting the pool of feminist writers in the country. She too finds self-expression in Nature but unlike many authors in the past- Anita Desai, Arundhati Roy etc. She has been neglected by the mainstream. This raises several questions about eco-poetics, why is that those that came from and followed the mainland preoccupations of Toru Dutt continue to be popularly consumed literature whereas poetry of an academic zeal and communitarian solidarity remain marginalized. Temsula Ao comes from the Ao subgroup in the Naga community and takes from many Naga myths, rituals, customs and ways of being in her poetry. Like all poetry, hers is political but her voice remains vivid and clear across her oeuvre. She speaks of what became of her community after the arrival of Christianity and region and the insurgency that has been widespread since 1947 in Nagaland. Her poetry collection, *'Songs from the Other Life'* is ethnographic. She speaks as a hunter in her poem *The Spear*, the hunter is in a conundrum where he has to choose to kill a pregnant deer, a taboo in the community. The poem ends with him marking the territory to signify his shame at having killed two lives so that no one else can repeat the same mistake. This is at once a narrative and also asserts that the lived experiences of the voices from her poems are inseparable from respect and consideration for Nature. An analysis of Temsula Ao's *'Laburnum for my Head'* is impossible without a discussion of its inherent ecofeminism. Her protagonist Lentina has been unable to grow the laburnum plant in her own garden in her life. She is obsessed with the plan and wishes for one to grow on her very grave. The very story of the collection establishes that the characters of Temsula Ao's writing cannot be read outside of their reliance on nature and its infinite beauty.

She recognizes the overwhelming patriarchy around her and wishes to fix it all with the beauty of Laburnum. She doesn't want a gravestone, a name or even a number to define her in her death, only the abundance of nature. She states how much she despises "Roney" and sees it as an extension of the patriarchal hold of systems around her. The story that follows the first story from the collection also echoes with ecocritical approaches and associates' men with the depletion of our resources. It is a story narrated by the wife of a hunter who seems to tell us what happened behind the scenes of her glorious and heroic husband's hunting expeditions. The wife describes for us how man's interference with Nature without a careful relationship with it can lead to downfall. She tells us about the leader of a pack of monkeys that her husband killed, and the elephant whose wrath he triggered with his careless acts, leading to destruction in the forest. This collection, along with several others

from Tamsula Ao's ever-expanding oeuvre are the testament to the excellence of contemporary fiction in India.

1.5 Mamang Dai

Mamang Dai is a writer who creates the most lucid and delightful images of the Adivasi community in her poetry. Her poem "Tapu" celebrates the ritual dancing of Adivasi people during their annual fencing contests. Works like these at once speak of festivals and also reveal to us how integrated the poet is with the community, their selfhood comes from the practices and values of their community. One is reminded of Mizo poet Mona Zote who was prolific in her writing, so much so that she was eventually buried with her gong so that the generations to come after her would remember her in their writings. She was a former member of the Indian Administrative Service but she quit the same to pursue a career as a writer. Some of her most widely read works include *'Once Upon a Moontime: from the Magic Story of Arunachal Pradesh'*, *'The Sky Queen'* and *'River Poems'*. She takes form several tangible and intangible ways of cultural expression from her surroundings and the Adivasi community and inculcates them in her writing. For her the modern-day destruction of the flora and fauna around her is a maternal concern, by extension it is the loss of her entire identity. "They have slain the wild cat and buried the hornbill in her maternal sleep" she says in her poem, *'An Obscure Place'*.

2. Key Debates and Controversies

I will be focusing on these key debates through my research, these developments in ecocriticism, feminism and literary scholarship are going to be considered during the course of my thesis writing.

2.1 Criticism of Gadgil and Guha

Readers today have worked on ecology in India and have established certain differences that they have with the writing of Gadgil and Guha. They give an account of pre-modern India that negates all contributions of Mughal India. They become caste apologists as they assert that Hinduism and its caste system were 'prudent' towards the environment whereas practitioners of Christianity and Islam were threats to the ecology of India. For them the harm done by the arrival of Islam is less when compared to that of Christianity which they assume to be synonymous with all of British rule. This reductionist view has been challenged by many Indian ecologists today. Sikhism and its contribution to the ecology of this country find no mention at all in their book. Their logic has been read as "functionalist eco-logic" for the Hindu that practices caste and subsequently Buddhism and Jainism come to represent the indigenous population of India whereas everyone else is seen as an 'Other'.

Research Methodology

My research methodology will include Close reading, analysing and interpreting on these key debates through the various developments in eco-criticism, feminism and literary scholarship. The main focus will be in the writings of feminist writers like Toru Dutt, Tamsula Ao, Mamang Dai and several others to bring out the genealogy of Indian eco-feminism in fiction writing. I would also like to bring out the problems of essentialising women and the "binary equivalence in gender", and critically analyse the French Feminist School of thought. One must be critical at the homogenisation of the North-East in India as well, through Tamsula Ao's writings we can bring out the symbols and imagery that are unique to different communities in the region and their eco-feminist nature. The readings will be intersectional, considering the many caste and class privileges that often usurp indigenous voices in Indian eco-feminism.

About Ecofeminism and its Classification:

Ecofeminism is the interconnection and relationship between Women and Nature in different aspects. It is believed that being a feministic quality like the mother Earth, women can conserve and preserve the Nature better than the men or male-centered culture. It is also called Ecological feminism and its name was coined by French Feminist, Francoise d'Eaubonne in 1974. When it comes to women and environmental deterioration, ecofeminism is the thread that connects the two. Ecologists believe that women have a key role to play in reversing the effects of land degradation. Writings by ecofeminists are intended to inspire women to take an active role in the conservation and protection of the natural environment. Women in northern India have joined the Chipko movement, which is working to protect forests from being destroyed. Women's emancipation movements such as Wangari Maathai's Green Belt Movement in Kenya (1977) and Vandana Shiva's Navadanya are instances of this. This movement emerged during the 1970s as a response to the interconnectedness of the oppression of women and the degradation of Nature. There are some major key aspects of Ecofeminism. They are:

- **Interconnection of Oppression:** Ecofeminism holds that the same attitude that contributes to women's oppression and exploitation is also responsible for environmental damage. It considers the patriarchal society's desire to control, dominate, and exploit Nature and women as interrelated issues.
- **Critique of Dualism:** Ecofeminists criticise Western philosophy's dualistic perspective, which separates mind from body, human from the natural world, and man from woman. They claim that these dichotomies have resulted in the oppression of both women and Nature.
- **Emphasis on Relationships and Diverse Perspectives:** Ecofeminism emphasises the importance of relationships, both between humans and with Nature. It supports a worldview that emphasises interdependence and connection. Ecofeminism is not a homogeneous movement. It encompasses a wide range of ideas and approaches, drawing on insights from various cultures, nationalities, and socioeconomic origins. This diversity reflects the movement's emphasis on inclusivity and global perspectives.
- **Activism and Advocacy:** Ecofeminists frequently participate in environmental and social justice campaigns. They advocate for environmentally responsible and socially fair policies and practices, contesting both patriarchy and environmental exploitation.
- **Gender and Nature:** These two are the interrelated concepts. These binaries are concerned as the gendered values. According to P K Nayar, "Nature is Feminine and Culture Masculine. Images like 'mother nature' achieve two things: They naturalize women and they feminize nature". Women and Nature has same feminine qualities as Mother protects and nurtures her children, same as the mother Earth does. Our mother Earth has enormous resources for us and it nurtures the whole mankind.
- **Spirituality and Earth-centered beliefs:** Some forms of ecofeminism incorporate spiritual or earth-centered ideas, regarding the earth as a living being and calling for a more harmonious and respectful interaction with the natural world.
- **Criticism and Debate:** Ecofeminism has been the topic of criticism and controversy. Some believe that it emphasises women's experiences and fosters gender stereotypes by inextricably tying women to Nature. Others doubt the feasibility of its objectives or the efficacy of its techniques.

As Ecofeminism is a broad area there are several types of Ecofeminism evolving from the 1970s. These types vary in their philosophical foundations, cultural contexts, and activist strategies. They are:

- **Cultural Ecofeminism:** This type of Ecofeminism emphasises women's connections to environment through a cultural or spiritual lens. It frequently draws on old or indigenous traditions that place women closer to nature, either naturally or through their social responsibilities. Cultural ecofeminists may argue for a return to more earth-centered, holistic modes of living.
- **Liberal Ecofeminism:** This approach, based on liberal feminism, emphasises gender equality in the environment. It emphasises the need of involving women in environmental decision-making and addresses themes such as the disproportionate impact of environmental deterioration on women.
- **Socialist/Marxist Ecofeminism:** This type of ecofeminism investigates the relationships between capitalism, patriarchy, and environmental deterioration. It criticises the capitalist economic system for perpetuating gender inequality and environmental degradation, and advocates for a more egalitarian and sustainable economic model.
- **Radical Ecofeminism:** Radical ecofeminism examines society's core power structures, attacking patriarchal systems that are viewed as the root cause of both women's oppression and environmental damage. This method frequently argues for significant social change.
- **Material Ecofeminism:** This strand examines the material and practical dimensions of women's relationships with Nature. It investigates how the environment directly influences women's employment and lives, as well as how environmental challenges affect women differently, particularly in underserved regions.
- **Postcolonial Ecofeminism:** This viewpoint includes the component of global inequality and colonialism. It examines how environmental exploitation and gender oppression intersect in the context of global power dynamics, focusing on the experiences and voices of women from the Global South.
- **Queer Ecofeminism:** This is a new branch of Ecofeminism; it integrates Queer theory into Ecofeminism. On this platform, it challenges traditional gender and sexuality norms and also evaluates how these norms intersect and interrelate with environmental issues.

So, these are the types of Ecofeminism which offer diverse ways of thinking about and addressing environmental and feminist issues, reflecting the complexity and interconnectedness of these concerns.

There are some major theorists in this field who contributed a lot with their literary works. Ecofeminism has been shaped by the contributions of numerous scholars, activists, and writers. Each came up with the unique perspectives and deep insights towards the movement. Vandana Shiva, an Indian scholar and environmental activist, she has been a pivotal figure in ecofeminism. She focuses on issues of biotechnology, biodiversity and sustainable agriculture. She contributed with many literary texts and her influential works include *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology, and Development* (1988) and *Ecofeminism* (1993, co-written with Maria Mies). Carolyn Merchant, another ecofeminist and an American environmental historian, she is known for her work on the relationship between science and the environment. Her seminal book *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution* (1980) is a foundational text in ecofeminist thought and revolution. Val Plumwood, an Australian philosopher and activist, she has contributed significantly to the

development of ecofeminist theory. Her book *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* (1993) outlines key arguments in ecofeminist philosophy. Maria Mies, a German sociologist, she has connected feminist and ecological issues, particularly in the context of globalization. She co-authored *Ecofeminism* with Vandana Shiva. Greta Gaard, an American ecofeminist writer, she has contributed to the understanding of ecofeminism, particularly in its relation to queer theory and vegetarianism. Her writings include *Ecofeminism: Women, Animals, Nature* (1993). Karen J. Warren, an American philosopher, who has developed a comprehensive ecofeminist philosophy. Her anthology *Ecofeminism: Women, Culture, Nature* (1997) offers a broad overview of ecofeminist thought. Starhawk (Miriam Simos), an American writer and activist, she integrates spirituality into her ecofeminist practice. She is known for her book *The Spiral Dance: A Rebirth of the Ancient Religion of the Great Goddess* (1979), which, while primarily focused on neopaganism, also touches on ecofeminist themes. Donna Haraway is famous for her essay *A Cyborg Manifesto* (1985), which is remarkable in ecofeminist circles for its challenge to traditional boundaries between humans, animals, and machines.

Conclusion

We have a belief of Nature as 'Mother Nature' or 'Mother Earth', basically as a provider of everything we need. The Eco-feminism primarily talks about the destruction and domination of Nature and Women respectively by the men and society. The connection and relation between Nature and Women are believed to be very historical and symbolical and they both are oppressed and dominated from time to time as per the needs of the society and men. Thus, through this research I would like to interpret the relation between them and the feminist theories including an ecological perspective.

There is a drastic change in the Indian eco-feminism eventually move out of an elitist romantic thought to a struggle for identity and its assertion. Women's writings have always occupied this rebellious territory of oneness with Nature and incorporated it into their writing. Contemporary literary fiction brings them into a discussion with the literary fiction from the past and from across the world, in relation with women and Nature. Women across the globe are finding solidarity by questioning this unnatural exploitative tendency of the commercial fiction and globalisation, which ultimately results in the exploitation and destruction of women and Nature. This study establishes the relationship between women and Nature and shows that women and Nature both are nurturer and a source to give not to destruct.

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