

MODULE-3
GENDER STUDIES IN INDIAN
SCENARIO
TOPIC- ECOLOGICAL FEMINISM



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- Eco-feminism or ecological feminism is a branch of feminism explores women's association with nature.
- It examines how patriarchal society looks at and deals with women and nature.
- Men dominate both women and nature.
- This dominance was observed as unjust by the eco-feminist's.
- Male dominated society associate women and nature with attributes like chaotic, irrational and in need of control.
- These characteristics which constitute the identities of women and nature are opposite to what men are constituted.
- Ordered, rational and capable to give directions are attributes of men.



- Men with such characteristics are supposed to control the chaotic and irrational women and nature.
- It creates a hierarchy in which men are placed in the peak of the hierarchy and; women and nature occupies the bottom.
- Eco-feminist's question this hierarchy which is formed of long term historical processes.
- Social norms intimidate both women and nature.
- These social norms are the creation of the patriarchal/male centred society.



- Eco-feminism advocates equality among genders and questions the patriarchal structure which gives an unjust view of the world and nature.
- Eco-feminists on the other hand, value the organic process of nature, projects the holistic vision of the nature and uphold collaboration among all.
- They venerate the earth and consider every being in the nature is connected to or depended on each other.
- Human beings are not exceptions.
- They are depended on nature. Its commitment to environment and women's association with Nature provides its uniqueness among feminists' movements



- Since women and nature are looked as identical, the efforts to liberate one would ensure the liberation of other.
- Ecofeminists wanted to unpack the long historical processes by which the patriarchal society brought both women and nature under subordination.
- Conferences of feminist scholars of academic and professional fields met and discussed these issues in 1970s and 1980s brought in the birth of eco feminism in the United States.



- Eco-feminists focused their effort first on unpacking the historical connection between women and nature.
- They traced how women and nature are depicted in past societies and how both developed identical characteristics.
- Attention shifted to sever the connection of subordination shared by women and nature once the contexts under which both were connected had proved.
- Rosemary Ruether one of the early eco-feminists upheld the need to end the mankind's (male dominated) domination on nature and, women should work for it as it leads to their own liberation.



- It needs the collaboration between women and environmentalists against the patriarchal structure which produced and propelled the subordination of women and nature for its interests.
- It led to the rereading of ecological theories which overlooked the unequal relationship between man and nature/woman.
- It also led to the critiquing of feminist theories which ignored the relationship between patriarchal structure and nature/woman.
- Ynestra King in her article 'what is Ecofeminism?' posits the concept of subordination of nature in the religious belief of people.



- Belief systems ask for the exploitation of nature by men and women alike.
- Ecofeminism acquired popularity by the late 1980s and grew out of the hands of the academicians to the activists.
- By the late 1980s ecofeminism had begun to branch out into two distinct schools of thought: radical ecofeminism and cultural ecofeminism.
- Radical ecofeminists contend that the dominant patriarchal society equates nature and women in order to degrade both.
- To that end, radical ecofeminism builds on the assertion of early ecofeminists that one must study patriarchal domination with an eye toward ending the associations between women and nature



- Of particular interest to those theorists is the ways in which both women and nature have been associated with negative or commodifiable attributes while men have been seen as capable of establishing order.
- That division of characteristics encourages the exploitation of women and nature for cheap labour and resources.
- Cultural ecofeminists, on the other hand, encourage an association between women and the environment.
- They contend that women have a more intimate relationship with nature because of their gender roles (e.g., family nurturer and provider of food) and their biology (e.g. menstruation, pregnancy and lactation).
- As a result, cultural ecofeminists believe that such associations allow women to be more sensitive to the sanctity and degradation of the environment.



- They suggest that this sensitivity ought to be prized by society insofar as it establishes a more direct connection to the natural world with which humans must coexist.
- Cultural ecofeminism also has roots in nature-based religions and goddess and nature worship) as a way of redeeming both the spirituality of nature and women's instrumental role in that spirituality.
- Not all feminists favoured the bifurcation of ecofeminism.
- Some women, for instance, worried that cultural ecofeminism merely enforces gender stereotypes and could lead to further exploitation.



- Others wanted a greater emphasis on nature-based religion, while still others insisted that a celebration of Western organized religions could accommodate nature-based worship.
- Those same groups also differed with regard to the romanticization of nature and the roles that various practices (such as vegetarianism or organic farming) ought to play in the application of ecofeminist principles.
- As a result, the movement continued to grow and expand in order to accommodate those variations, and most self-identified ecofeminists celebrate the myriad definitions and applications available under the general rubric of ecofeminism



- Many women remained unsatisfied with the limits of the movement.
- Of particular concern was the failure of women in developed countries to acknowledge the ways in which their own lifestyles were leading to further degradation of their counterparts in less-developed countries and of the Earth as a whole.
- Women from developing countries pointed to the effects of commercial food production, sweatshop labour, and poverty on their families and their landscapes.
- They accused white ecofeminists of promoting that exploitation by purchasing goods created as a result of inequity.



- They also took issue with the appropriation of indigenous cultures and religions for the purpose of advancing a philosophical position.
- Thus, contemporary ecofeminism must be developed to acknowledge the very real effects of race, class, ethnicity, and sexuality on a woman's social position.
- Women involved in environmental justice and women representing minority cultures have worked to establish their own sense of ecofeminism to include local cultures and spirituality, a celebration of their roles as mothers and caretakers, and a recognition of the ways in which Western colonization compromised those beliefs.



- Many ecofeminists were also concerned with what they saw as a heterosexual bias in the movement insofar as ecofeminism appeared to privilege the experience of heterosexual women over homosexual women.
- To correct that problem, an emerging school of ecofeminism emphasized the need to incorporate the tenets of queer theory into the precepts of ecofeminism.
- They contended that if ecofeminism is indeed committed to fighting against systems of oppression and domination, then the movement must also acknowledge the ways in which sexuality—and, more specifically, responses to that sexuality—also figure as oppressive mechanisms.



- Thus, the redemption of women's roles and opportunities must also include a valuing of sexual differences as well as differences in race, class, and gender.
- Ecofeminist scholars often contend that the great plurality of beliefs within eco feminism is one of the movement's greatest strengths.
- They note that the myriad definitions and applications, which sometimes complement and sometimes conflict with one another, demonstrate the liberating and inclusive aspects of the movement.



- They also point to the important commonalities shared within the various schools of eco feminism.
- All eco feminists, they say, work toward the development of theory and action that acknowledge the problems inhering patriarchal and hierarchical systems.
- They advocate the revaluing of science to acknowledge the role of subjectivity and intuition.
- They also support the creation of a new worldview that celebrates all biological systems as inherently valuable.
- Finally, they insist on solving those problems through affirming and nonviolent means.