

“Women-Nature Interface: A Reading of Arundhati Roy and Kamala Markandaya’s Selected Works.”

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Article Received: 04/10/2023

Article Revised: 07/11/2023

Article Accepted: 08/11/2023

Published Online: 08/11/2023

DOI:10.47311/IJOES.2023.5.11.19

Abstract

The present paper delves into the intersection of ecofeminism, literature, and societal critique through the works of two prominent Indian authors, Arundhati Roy and Kamala Markandaya. Focusing on Arundhati Roy's novel *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* and Kamala Markandaya's novel *Nectar in a Sieve*, the study employs an ecofeminist lens to unravel the intricate dynamics between nature and women in the face of patriarchal dominance. By examining the portrayal of marginalized and revolutionary women, including trans-women, the paper elucidates the parallel degradation of both women and the environment within oppressive societal structures. The analysis explores how these authors challenge conventional norms and envision a transformative, non-anthropocentric relationship with nature, advocating for the empowerment of women and the restoration of ecological balance. Through a comparative study of these literary works, the paper aims to contribute to the ongoing discussion regarding ecofeminism and its implications for gender, nature, and societal paradigms. The interconnectedness of ecofeminism with diverse facets of life is evident, from the grassroots movements in India's forests to the intricate intersectionality of caste, class, and gender in environmental activism.

Keywords: Ecofeminism, Ecocritical Analysis, Patriarchy, Women, Nature.

Introduction:

Ecofeminism, both a literary and cultural perspective, serves as a unique lens for scrutinizing the representation of nature in literature and its interconnectedness with race, gender, class, and sexuality. The paper delves into ecofeminism principles, rooted in the belief that patriarchal societies perpetuate sexism, racism, class exploitation, and environmental destruction. Hierarchical dualism, elevating traits associated with masculinity over femininity, is explored as a mechanism reinforcing domination over both women and nature.

Originating in Françoise d'Eaubonne's 1974 book "Féminisme ou la Mort," the term "ecofeminism" underscores the link between feminism and environmentalism. As a value system and social movement, ecofeminism seeks to challenge male-centric ideologies contributing to environmental mistreatment. The paper concludes by advocating for ideologies of Promoting equality, nonviolence, and non-hierarchical systems, which is a focal point of the paper. Promoting equality, nonviolence, and non-hierarchical systems is a focal

point of the paper. To establish a utopia where nature and all living beings are held in the highest regard.

Ecofeminism has broadened the horizons of literary and feminist studies, unveiling the intricate connections between Environmental deterioration and the plight of Women in male-dominated societal structures societies. This paper embarks on a journey through the impact of ecofeminism on Indian literature, spotlighting the influential works of Arundhati Roy and Kamala Markandaya. Roy, celebrated for her literary prowess and environmental activism, unfolds a tapestry of narratives in *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, intricately weaving environmental and feminist issues. This analysis employs an ecofeminism lens to illuminate the struggles of marginalized characters within a patriarchal society indifferent to ecological concerns.

In parallel, Kamala Markandaya's novel *Nectar in a Sieve* portrays the protagonist Rukmani, a symbol of oppressed women intimately linked to nature through her labor and dependence on the land. The chronological exploration of Markandaya's narrative emphasizes ecofeminism's recognition of women and the environment as independent entities subjected to degradation within male-dominated societies.

Discussion:

Arundhati Roy's novel intricately explores the profound connection between women and nature. The ecofeminism lens reveals a symbolic interdependence, emphasizing the inseparable bond between women and the natural world. Roy's portrayal of nature may align with ecofeminism ideals, depicting it as a source of empowerment for women. The cyclical nature of life in the novel symbolizes resilience and strength, mirroring the struggles and triumphs of the female characters. Analyzing through an ecofeminism lens, the novel addresses the exploitation of women and the environment. Instances of disproportionate impact on women due to environmental degradation echo broader ecofeminism concerns about the intersectionality of gender and ecology. Roy's work likely challenges traditional power structures that exploit both women and the environment, aligning with ecofeminism ideologies. The narrative may present instances where female characters resist and redefine their roles within oppressive systems.

The text delves into the intricate connections between the subjugation of both nature and women within a patriarchal society. The study extends its focus to the marginalized and revolutionary roles of Tran's women and other disenfranchised women, highlighting their endeavors to challenge and resist the oppressive patriarchal system.

In alignment with the ecofeminism perspective, the author underscores the transformative efforts of ecofeminists—writers and activists alike—who, through their profound writings and committed activism, strive to empower women while concurrently advocating for the preservation and maintenance of the environment. This acknowledgment extends to recognizing the pivotal role played by Indian women in the realms of environmental activism and literature, contributing to the ongoing challenge against the patriarchal society's exploitation of both nature and women.

The ecofeminism perspective posits the interconnectedness of ecology and feminism, highlighting how both nature and women face exploitation within male-dominated societies. In the novel *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, Roy narrates a transgender woman, Anjum, who possesses both male and female sex organs. The protagonist in Roy's novel is Anjum, born with partial female and male sex organs, initially named Aftab. Her mother expected a son, and her father tried to transform Anjum's sex organs into a male one. All these disturbing forces work against the law of nature and are socially constructed. Queer

ecofeminism theories interrogate the idea of “natural” as put forward by the principles of heterosexual normatively.

Roy begins the novel with a prelude explaining the condition of the protagonist, Anjum, who is very sad because of the confrontational social forces, so he asks the Imam :

“You tell me where do old catcalls go to die? Do you not suppose that the almighty bone that put us on this earth has made proper arrangements to take us down?” (Roy 5).

The above line expresses Anjum’s predicament and the rejection that people face in society due to their differences. Anjum does not find happiness in the ordinary life. Thus, she finds comfort in the graveyard. Roy, in the novel, showcases the ecofeminism concerns through the protagonist, Anjum, who transforms the graveyard into a colorful guesthouse called Jannat. Saddam Hussein's wedding, Tilo's educational institution, and Zainab's wildlife park become part of it.

The novel tries to convey the idea that senior people and geriatric catcalls face rejection by society, where she discusses her concern for the decline of Delhi. The shark population of a new chemical, diclofenac, added a cow feed for increased milk products with indulgences like ice cream overlooking the unnoticed death of the formerly friendly old musketeers. These lines relate to ecofeminism and environmental principles through the impact of diclofenac on the Delhi shark and the exploitation of womanish cows to increase milk products.

Through the ecofeminist lens, the paper precisely traces the eventuality of exercising nature as a transformative force to address and amend unsexed issues. It explores how embracing the symbiotic relationship between humanity and the terrain can serve as an essential tool in dismembering the established morals that silence and oppress women and other forms of human life. This ecofeminist perspective sheds light on the connected struggles and possibilities for emancipation within the novel's narrative.

Kamala Markandaya’s novel *Nectar in a Sieve* may parade an ecofeminism perspective by exploring the harmony between women and nature, disintegrated by external factors like industrialization. The narrative could claw into how women's lives are intricately tied to the natural environment. The socio-profitable environment in *Nectar in a Sieve* may reflect ecofeminism themes, examining how changes affect women and the terrain. The novel might explore the themes of capitalism, nature exploitation, and women's subjugation. The ecofeminist analysis could concentrate on how womanish characters parade adaptability and rigidity in the face of environmental challenges. The capability of women to manage changing ecological conditions may emblemize a broader ecofeminism communication about strength deduced from a harmonious relationship with nature. In an ecofeminism reading, attention can be given to the voices of women and nature within the narrative. Exploring whether womanish characters express a unique understanding of the terrain and cases where nature itself is given a voice aligns with ecofeminism principles.

Rukmani is a visionary emissary of Mother Nature. Rukmani, the leading promoter, a poor, impoverished woman, explained her life, which was full of hurdles, but she fought veritably bravely malignancy of giving defenses. She always stood first to protect her family from society and natural disasters. Rukmani loves her fields as she loves her children. She was only twelve when she married Nathan, who was older than her. Romani’s relationship with nature looks to be superb. She belongs to a well-known family, but after marriage, she moved to a poor slush house with a peasant, Nathan, but she was happy to move to her new life. The text spells out Vandana Shiva's viewpoint that development is only for man and a

reason for environmental obliteration and trouble of livelihoods for a planter. The news delineates Rosemary Radford's author's argument that The perpetuation and validation of environmental degradation and the decline of women are enshrined by a social framework built on a hierarchy that enables one group to dominate another. Because of Rukmani's close tie with nature, her diurnal life routine is environmentally driven when Rukmani's husband fails and she is alone. The lines reflect this: "Eventually at night I suppose my hubby is with me again coming gently through mists, and we tranquil together (Markandaya's 2010, p 01). In word mist, it relates to the late summer season (afterlife), when rain falls frequently and the meadows and ranges are full of dew drops. The rainfall is fantastic, and the promoter or narrator feels in this atmosphere when she finds herself with her hubby.

"While going to her hubby's house, she, the sucker of nature, gives a stunning account of her nanosecond observation.' The atmosphere resonated with the melody of bells and playful calls, accompanied by the chirping of sparrows and bulbuls. Substantially'(p. 04)." " She starts her trip in a bullock wain reaches a slush house, and says suitably,' it suits me relatively well to live then.'(P-06)."

Markandaya paints an authentic portrayal of rural existence, depicting Rukmani and Nathan not merely as individual characters but as symbols of the entire community. In this setting, women, burdened by the toil of their labor, face devaluation and exploitation, embodying a harsh reality with meager appreciation. The ongoing efforts of ecofeminists to establish equal value for both women and nature will eventually prevail. Ultimately, both these entities will be accorded value on equitable grounds, recognized as independent living beings."

Conclusion

The novels for the present study feature women as victims and potent agents of change. In the concluding chapters, Arundhati Roy's novel *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* serves as a poignant memorial of the oppression endured by women and nature in patriarchal societies. Roy's ecofeminism lens calls for transformative change, situating women as catalysts for ecological mindfulness. Kamala Markandaya's novel *Nectar in a Sieve* further reinforces this struggle, portraying the adaptability and affinity of women, embodied by the promoter Rukmani, with the natural world.

The exploration envisions a future where ecofeminism ideals beget equal recognition and value for both women and nature. It asserts that celebrating women's benefactions in ménage and fieldwork glasses the necessary shift in societal considerations, challenging the exploitation faced by both women and the terrain. In this narrative of connected struggles, ecofeminism emerges as an essential thread.

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