



ECOFEMINISM: A PATH TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Introduction:

Concept of Ecofeminism:

The combination of deep ecology with feminism is known as ecofeminism. Deep ecology investigates the interaction between humans and the natural

world and challenges the implicit superiority that humans have placed on nature. Deep ecology necessitates the development of a new ethic that values nature equally from a more comprehensive perspective.

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Ecofeminism, often known as ecological feminism, is a branch of feminism that examines how women and nature interact. French feminist Françoise Dieudonné came up with the term for it in 1974. The fundamental beliefs of feminism, such as the equality of the sexes, the revaluation of non-patriarchal or nonlinear systems, and a worldview that values intuitive knowledge and cooperation are all used by ecofeminism. Ecofeminism expands on these ideas by emphasizing environmental protection and recognizing the connections between women and the natural world. The focus of this ideology is on how patriarchal or male-centered society affects both nature and women. Ecofeminists look into how gender categories impact people to demonstrate how social conventions unfairly oppress women and nature. These rules, according to the concept, also produce an incomplete understanding of the world, and its proponents promote an alternative worldview that sees the earth as sacred, acknowledges how dependent humans are on nature, and values all life as precious.

Ecofeminism is a complex ideology with opposing points of view, much like feminism itself. The idea that there is a connection between the dominance of women in contemporary society and the dominance of nature unites these points of view. To remove these and other forms of oppression, according to ecofeminists, an examination and comprehension of these relationships are required.

• Concept of Sustainable Development:

Sustainable development is defined as growth that satisfies existing demands without jeopardizing the capacity of future generations. Environmental harm is compensated for in the form of deforestation, air and water pollution, soil erosion, and other forms of economic development. The harm could outweigh the benefits of producing goods and services of a higher caliber. To advance, it is necessary to fulfill everyone's basic requirements and to give them the chance to realize their goals for a better life. The natural systems that sustain life on Earth—the atmosphere, rivers, soils, and living things—must not be put in jeopardy



by sustainable development.

• **Objectives of sustainable development:**

- (a) To encourage growth that minimizes environmental issues
- (b) To fulfill the requirements of the current generation while maintaining the environmental quality for future generations.

• **The following principles will help us achieve sustainable development:**

- (a) Limiting human activity.
- (b) Effective input, not ineffective input, should be used to develop the technology. (c) At no point may consumption surpass redemption.
- (d) The rate of using renewable resources shouldn't be faster than the rate of producing replacement energy from renewable sources.
- (e) All types of pollution must be decreased.
- (f) by utilizing natural resources wisely

Ecofeminism plays a significant role in applying above mentioned principles to achieve sustainable development.

Ecofeminism & Sustainable Development:

The objective of both ecofeminist and sustainable development debates is to construct alternative visions and sustainable methods for enhancing the quality of life. Ecofeminists have concentrated on the study of the problem, highlighting women's involvement in reversing the deteriorating global conditions, whereas sustainable development has focused on the processes toward achieving sustainability. As a result of these deteriorating social and environmental conditions, localized protests associated with feminist, anti-nuclear, peace, and environmental movements have emerged globally. By establishing a link between women's involvement in these protests and their awareness of their gender-specific relationship with the environment, ecofeminists contend that women play a critical role in addressing the environmental problem. Further, they maintained that as women are equipped

with the knowledge and abilities needed to manage natural resources and their sensitivity towards it and the environment, and a high level of ecological awareness; they are the main factor in sustainable development. Women depend on the environment for all of their domestic activities, from cooking to relaxing, thus it seems to reason that they are more likely to care about the environment. Women are the most skilled resource gatherers. They employ natural resources like water, trees, and land for household chores. As a result, when the environment is lost, it immediately affects the lives of women. Since ancient times, women have been recognized as the best environmental stewards. In regulating the environment, women are very crucial. So while thinking of sustainable development, we must take into consideration the ecofeminist perspective of it.

In areas like the Indian subcontinent, where the bulk of natural resources are already being used to meet the fundamental survival needs of the vast majority of people, ecological movements are growing from conflicts over natural resources and the people's rights to survival. As predatory exploitation of natural resources to fuel, the process of development had expanded in extent and severity, and the intensity and scope of ecology movements in independent India had steadily widened. Women and the environment are intimately connected, and because of this, the area of eco-feminism, which unites feminism and ecological ethics, was born. To study the link between ecofeminism and sustainable development, I will take a brief account of the role played by women in different ecological movements which proves that women are the pioneers in sustaining development as environment saviors.

1) Chipko Movement:

The ecological movement known as the Chipko movement, with a focus on the preservation and conservation of forests, first emerged in 1973 in the



Garhwal region of Uttar Pradesh. A conflicted perspective regarding their place in society has been formed by the collective mobilization of women in this campaign. They started to demand an equal say in decision making alongside men. Women were fighting for both individual rights and societal transformation at the same time. The chipko movement included women in a variety of ways. This movement does an excellent job of illuminating the connection between women and the environment, specifically how environmental degradation may intensify women's restrictive status and make women aware of their legal rights.

2) Silent Valley Movement:

At the southernmost tip of the Western Ghats in Kerala in 1976, Silent Valley was one of the key biodiversity hotspots. The government's decision to build a dam for a hydroelectric power project in the silent valley forest was opposed by this movement, which was led by Sujatha Kumari. The woodland was designated as a National Park as a result of numerous demonstrations and the active involvement of women.

3) Appiko Movement:

Another significant social movement, the Appiko movement, was founded in Karnataka in 1983. This movement was started in opposition to the government's plan to clear forests for industrial development. As a result, many adults, adolescents, and children hugged trees. The part played by Adivasi women as well as the role of Mahila Mandal is very important in this.

4) Navdanya Movement:

As a program of the Research Foundation for Science, Technology, and Ecology, a participatory research endeavor to provide direction and support to environmental action, Navdanya is the largest organic movement since 1984. The term "navdanya" refers to nine different types of crops that together provide food security for all of India. The major goal is to protect seeds against biopiracy. Women farmers from

different parts of the country made up the majority of the Navdanya movement's members.

5) Narmada Bachao Andolan:

The Narmada Bachao Andolan, which began in 1985 in villages near the Narmada River, is arguably the longest-lasting Gandhian nonviolent movement in human history. The river is the scene of a significant fight involving common people reinterpreting and applying long-forgotten Gandhian tools. The most important slogan was Nari Shakti Ka Sanman.

Above mentioned participation of women in various environmental movements have acknowledged their own distinctive relationships with the environment, including specific demands, obligations, and understanding of natural resources. This explains why women are affected differently from males by environmental deterioration, deforestation, pollution, and overpopulation. As women's roles are now acknowledged in every profession, they must be likewise acknowledged in the management of the environment to encourage more women to take an active role in society. Considering that women in rural regions have a stronger connection to natural resources and conservation than males do. Because of their traditional gender roles, they frequently interact with the environment, including the land, the water, the forest, and the wildlife. It is evident that women's contributions improve rule compliance and increase transparency in all fields of endeavor. It even promotes better dispute resolution and compliance.

Conclusion:

The relationship between women and the natural world is examined by the social movement and philosophy known as ecofeminism. According to ecofeminism, women's environmental involvement is evidence of and a direct result of woman-nature relationships. Being tied to nature in a variety of ways, like as through their biological status, reproductive roles, and discrimination is one of ecofeminism's perspectives.



According to ecofeminism, in order to achieve women's liberation, the ecological movement needs to work closely with local and international movements for women. Various environmental movements show how women are advancing in the defense of natural forests. Women are the key factors that promote sustainable development as they are the better managers of their families, nature and environment.

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