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## The Ecofeminist literature; through the lens of Socialism

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Dated back, the concept of eco-feminism came into play during the 1970s and 80s. When Françoise d'Eaubonne, a French feminist coined the term. Ecofeminism is treated both as a theory as well as a movement, which opposes the exploitation of the Environment and oppression of the 'second sex', that is Women. It defies any kind of violence and domination over the Environment and Women, by analysing conditions of both in 'man-made' society where everything is controlled and works according to set norms of patriarchy. Ecofeminism intends for transformation rather than reformation. Its concept lies underneath ecology and feminism. Where ecology entails life bearing and surrounding areas where we inhabit and enjoy full freedom by exploiting the Environment, feminism is a concept where discrimination against women and their works is put forth. The amalgamation of feminism and ecocriticism is ecofeminism We can say both Environment and Women resemble each other and hence studied together, for bias and prejudice against them. A textual and retrospective study of Ecofeminism and Socialism was done to curate relevant information. Texts like *Solar Storms* by Linda Hogan, *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Development* by Vandana Shiva are a couple of ecofeminist books that I'm going to analyse with a socialist approach. This article aims to throw light on the socialist interpretation of eco-feminist literature from two different regions, portraying different oppressions described by authors. Where ecofeminism revolves around discrimination and exploitation of the Environment and Women by regarding both possess similar characteristics. Socialists reject any kind of oppression regardless of class, race and gender, and believe in equality among the population in society. This indicates Ecofeminism as a subpart of Socialism.

## Socialism

As the name suggests, socialism is society centric, where the main objective of the movement is equal distribution of assets. It believes in public possession rather than privatisation. Equality, among the population, is what socialism seeks. Socialism seeks for 'utopia' which implies equality, fraternity and liberty for all. It does not provide ground for any kind of discrimination based on class, gender and caste. Socialism denies any kind of hierarchy or patriarchy. It advocates complete equitable distribution of anything and everything. "The condition for the free development of each is the free development of all" as proclaimed in the *Manifesto of the Communist Party (1848)* by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. Which can be treated as the crucial idea of socialism. That indicates how equal distribution of assets and equality among citizens is essential for the development of the nation and humanity as a whole. Its early footprints were visible in the industrial revolution of the 1830s, from where it sprouted as a political movement.

Claude-Henri de Saint- Simon, one of the early utopian socialists, advocated public control over property despite public ownership as central planning is more fruitful than capitalism. And economic management should be in the hands of the intellectual and efficient members. Robert Owen believes in changing human nature. As it is not fixed but formed. This implies that we humans repeat what we see and do what we are exposed to. If we are surrounded by corruption, wrongdoing and depraved conditions we will ultimately start practicing the same. As a society, we are living in effect of the psychology of members. Also, we know that man and society are interdependent, contamination in one will spoil the other. Thus developing a sense of public ownership rather than private possession is essential. As we humans did not live or work solely but we are in cooperation with society and its members hence we should work and live accordingly . It completely denies what the capitalist system believes in, where capitalism believes in private ownership and reckless production to meet its ends.

Earlier in More's *Utopia*, we can witness the same sense of justice and equality among all. Whose rallying point was "liberty, equality and fraternity", finds its roots in Platonism and Christianity. Where we have traces of sharing and trying to fill the other if someone is lacking. For example in Plato's *Republic*, we have a reflection of austere society, where people of the guardian class not only share goods among the deprived but also children. In the early Christian community, a simple form of socialism was practised, by sharing goods and stuff.

### **Ecofeminism**

The amalgamation of two different terms is ecofeminism. The blending of ecocriticism and feminism is 'ecofeminism' both of these are standing against discrimination and exploitation of the Environment and Women. Some famous quotes explaining the impact and degree of exploitation of the Environment and Women under patriarchy. "Do not avert your eyes. It is important that you see this. It is important that you feel this."(Kojouri). This line draws our attention to the ignorance of society and members towards discrimination and exploitation which is important to be addressed. "Because people and especially men feel superior, the environment, animals or women can be exploited."(Hache) where she pointed out the embodied patriarchy of men over Women and culture over Environment. Like capitalism men are believers of production over reproduction and meeting with the same they exploit the Environment recklessly. "In Western patriarchal culture, both women and the nonhuman Environment have been devalued alongside their assumed opposites—men and civilization/culture."(Kemmerer) in her book *Sister Species: Women, Animals and Social Justice*, Ecofeminism comes in light of overexploitation carried by Westerners (North America and Europe) especially. Developed countries exploit Environment more than developing ones. 80% of resources consumed by 20% of the world population. Ecofeminism focuses on this uneven distribution and exploitation. "I offer my expertise, emotion and activism. I offer my mind, my heart and my hands."(Caputova) President of Slovakia and environmental activist. "Ecofeminism is an integral facet of the women's movement because it addresses the severing of Women and Mother

Nature, and the exploitation of both.”(Brown) Both Environment and Women are considered as sharing similar characteristics like caring and nurturing as primary concerns. Ecofeminism addresses the exploitation of both mother and the motherland, who is life-giving and life-supporting. The environment is our mother who supports us in every way to live our lives, by providing essentials. The exploitation of which ultimately results in our destruction.

### **Ecofeminist Literature**

*Solar Storms* by Linda Hogan focuses on the relationship of patriarchy holding Nature and Women. As both were exploited since the human race appeared. The exploitation of Angela's mother; Hannah and Environment both were drawn parallel in this narrative. Angela, who is the 17 years old unwanted daughter of Hannah, faces an identity crisis which she overcomes by situating herself in harmony with the environment and communicating with water bodies. Hannah was abused by a man similarly colonizers exploit Environment and both symbolise patriarchy of dominating others (Women and Environment) both were excavated until they turned hollow and became destructive. As Hannah turns possessed and Environment turns disastrous. A Socialist approach here can be made on North Americans' command of changing the river's flow by building a dam or reservoir which will result in a change of direction of natural flow and numerous animals were also affected by the dam. As socialist beliefs in public ownership defying capitalism in good governance. Here protest is brought by people against inhumane behavior towards humans(minority), as well as nonhumans. The division between governing North Americans is against the socialist approach. As socialism can be seen as hedonistic in approach, believing in the happiness of maximum number is a must. Being humans or nonhumans, both need equal care and attention. There should be no discrimination by the dominating(patriarchy) to the dominated minority(women and environment). As socialism aims to harmonize relationships among all members of society, *Solar Storms* shows the optimistic hope for a state of the harmonious relationship shared by the Environment and humans someday.

Moving to another ecofeminist work, *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Development* by Vandana Shiva, an activist and writer who protested against biotechnology and center of the anti-GMO movement. She is an advocate of traditional methods urging against modernization. As modernity is the main proponent of the exploitation of Women and the Environment. As she argued that this exploitation is the result of Western Civilisation, their “rationality” and scientific research. Her works dwell in the oppression, ecological crisis and colonisation of both Environment and Women in this patriarchal society. This oppression of minorities is defying socialism where one is dominating others and wholly focused on maximum production despite reproduction. This production is an indication of capitalism, not socialism. Shiva in her work named this development 'mal-development' which runs by a male dominating society where there is no space for neutral and biased toward the other half. This work is one of the best examples of socialists-ecofeminism literature, in which she put forth every aspect of biased exploitation under one section for economic development which resulted in an imbalance in society and destroyed ecology. Her chapters depict how our current society is following capitalism despite Socialism. As men are capital centric which is violent, unlike feminine principles that is non-violent and allow interconnection and nurturing. Also, she portrayed the problems faced by women and the environment due to the reckless demand of production.

### **Conclusion**

As I go through the principles and phenomena of Socialism and Ecofeminism and application to Ecofeminist literature I discover interconnectedness in both ideologies. As any kind of oppression of one by another is an area of interest in Socialism as it rejects any kind of discrimination among members of society. As we know ecofeminism arose from the oppression, discrimination and exploitation of Environmental and Women by patriarchy. This oppression is not new or recent; this has been happening for a long time. These are rooted in humanity with the occurrence of the human race. For stopping this exploitation some steps were taken by placing both in the worshipable state. But it is not

possible without uprooting the notion of being an authority. Such inbuilt patriarchy is somewhere embodied by everyone consciously or unconsciously. Socialists advocated equality and public control in which the public consists of both males and females. There are no set boundaries or distinguished notions. There should be no domination of one over others, without keeping in mind the idea of class, creed, gender and caste. Every decision must be hedonistic and avoid fulfillment and happiness of a particular spectrum. It is not a happy place to live in such a society where members are discriminated against on any single criteria or treated as a minority and dominated by others. This domination is also rejected by ecofeminists as it results in the oppression of particular others (Environment and Women). This makes their protest against this oppression like socialists' protests against capitalism. Socialism here is an umbrella term that engulfs ecofeminism or we can comprehend ecofeminism as a branch of socialism. Where socialism is the main body guiding equal freedom and happiness and rejection of any oppression regardless of any criteria. These criteria are constructed according to their need. In Manusmriti it said that no woman is free as she takes birth she is under his father's will, when married she will be under her husband and after her husband her son will be her guardian. This is deeply rooted in our societies all around the world . Also, I used 'Environment' despite 'Nature' as nature implies an anthropocentric term which again puts humans at the top and establishes it as something that fulfills the requirement, while Environment refers to the notion of nature for its own sake and independence. We humans need an Environment, not we are required for the Environment. Humans always exploited Environments for their own requirements. And this explanation is directly proportional to capitalism which is another way of promoting exploitation and hierarchy. A couple of quotes for summing up this article; "While there's capitalism, there'll be socialism, because there is always a response to injustice"(Miliband) and the last by Annie Besant quotes "Socialism is the ideal state, but it can never be achieved while man is so selfish". Both the quotes here are self-sufficient to explain the importance and also how it can be achieved.

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