

ECOFEMINIST CRITIQUE IN INDIA: UNVEILING ENVIRONMENTAL AND GENDERED CONNECTIONS

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Abstract

This study investigates the historical development of ecofeminism in India and analyzes the interconnectedness between environmental degradation and the subordination of women, with a specific focus on how patriarchal structures contribute to the exploitation of both women and the environment. A mixed-methods research approach, combining qualitative and quantitative methods, was adopted to gain a comprehensive understanding of the research topic. Purposive sampling was used to select key informants for interviews, including ecofeminist thinkers, activists, scholars, and representatives of influential ecofeminist movements or organizations in India. Surveys were administered to a diverse sample of individuals involved in ecofeminist movements. The data collected encompassed demographic information, indicators of environmental degradation, women's subordination, and patriarchal structures. Thematic analysis was employed to analyze qualitative data, while quantitative data was subjected to statistical analysis techniques. The findings highlight the emergence of ecofeminism in India, key thinkers in the field, and influential ecofeminist movements. Environmental degradation indicators reveal significant challenges such as deforestation, water and air pollution, land degradation, and loss of

biodiversity. Women's subordination indicators underscore gender-based disparities and violence against women, including the gender wage gap, low women's representation in Parliament, child marriage, and domestic violence. Patriarchal structures and exploitation indicators demonstrate the unequal distribution of power and resources. The research findings contribute to a deeper understanding of the interplay between environmental degradation, women's subordination, and patriarchal structures in India. They provide valuable insights for promoting gender equality, women's empowerment, and sustainable environmental practices in the country.

Keywords: *Ecofeminist, Critique, India, Environmental, Gendered*

1. INTRODUCTION

The 1970s and 1980s saw the emergence of ecofeminism as numerous feminist and environmental theories and activisms came into contact. Francoise d'Eaubonne first used the phrase in her 1974 book *Le Feminisme ou la Mort* (Feminism or Death). [1] While some theorists, like Ynestra King, refer to it as the third wave of feminism, others classify it as a subset of deep ecology. Ecofeminism functions both an environmental critique of feminism and a feminist critique of environmentalism at the same time, acting in both and neither of these large movements. There are many different ecofeminist paths; there is no one recognized or orthodox "ecofeminism."

When women protested after the partial nuclear meltdown at Three Mile Island in Dauphin County, Pennsylvania, in March 1979, ecofeminism began to spread around the world. Even though the meltdown was said to have had little impact, it inspired campaigners, especially women, to start an anti-nuclear movement. Since then, it has taken on ideological undertones, many of which can be contested due to regional, caste-, and class-related implications that traditional ecofeminism tends to overlook. Ecofeminism, on the other hand, asks for a nurturing inclusion in caring for the environment and the ecosystem, but unlike other dominant ideologies, it neither does nor veers towards direct action, which works against it being recognized as an ideology by many.

An ideal opportunity for nurses to once again take the lead in environmental health is created by renewed public and political interest in the environment and its effects on human health. Unquestionably intricate, the mechanisms behind environmental health disparities call for novel conceptualizations to direct study and policy.

Within the field of ecofeminism, awareness over the connections between environmental challenges and gender inequality has grown.[2] As a theoretical framework, ecofeminism acknowledges that patriarchal institutions and exploitative views toward the environment are profoundly ingrained in both the exploitation of the environment and the oppression of women. This research article intends to shed light on the environmental and gendered links that impact the experiences of women in India by analyzing the ecofeminist criticism in the Indian context.

India, a nation renowned for its extensive cultural legacy and varied ecosystems, also faces serious environmental difficulties. Both rural and urban people are being negatively impacted by the rapid industrialization, urbanization, and unsustainable resource extraction. In this situation, women, particularly those who live in underprivileged neighborhoods, are disproportionately affected.

The study will examine the effects of environmental deterioration on Indian women, paying particular attention to pressing problems including water scarcity, deforestation, and climate change. In many rural homes, women frequently perform important responsibilities as the main carers, food suppliers, and resource managers. Because of this, their livelihoods and general well-being are at risk due to the depletion of natural resources, alteration of weather patterns, and loss of biodiversity. In addition, the article will investigate the structural and cultural causes of gendered environmental inequalities in India. Women encounter obstacles while trying to acquire resources and participate in decision-making, which makes them even more vulnerable to environmental problems. Women's mobility and agency are frequently constrained by societal conventions and cultural expectations, which makes it difficult for them to actively contribute to environmental conservation initiatives.

1.1 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To investigate the historical development of ecofeminism in India, including its emergence, key thinkers, and influential movements.
2. To examine the interconnectedness between environmental degradation and the subordination of women in India, analyzing how patriarchal structures contribute to the exploitation of both women and the environment.

2. REVIEW OF LITREATURE

In their book "Gender and the Environment: Feminist Engagements," Visvanathan, Shiv, et al. (2021) [3] offer a thorough examination of how gender and the environment interact. The writers discuss the value of including gender into environmental discourse while analyzing distinct feminisms perspectives. Their work is an important source for comprehending the theoretical underpinnings of ecofeminism and its applicability to solving environmental problems.

In their essay titled "Ecofeminism in India: A Review of Contemporary Perspectives," Shukla, Richa, and Deepti Mishra (2022) [4] give a survey of modern viewpoints on ecofeminism in India. They address significant contributions and discussions within the field as they investigate how ecofeminist philosophy has evolved in the Indian setting. In order to effectively address gender, class, caste, and other intersecting identities in environmental action, the essay provides insights into the intersectional aspects of ecofeminism.

In her work "Gendered Dimensions of Climate Change in India: An Ecofeminist Analysis," Radha Kumar (2022) [5] focuses on the gendered aspects of climate change in India. She investigates the various effects of climate change on women, especially those in vulnerable communities, using an ecofeminist viewpoint. The article highlights the requirement for gender-responsive climate policies and initiatives that address the unique vulnerabilities and adaptability of women.

Through the use of a case study from rural India, Joshi, Neha, and Nidhi Shrivastava (2022) [6] conduct an intersectional examination of women's experiences with climate change adaptation. In their work, "Intersectional Analysis of Women's Experiences in Climate Change Adaptation: A Case Study from Rural India," the authors look at how gender intersects with other social factors, such as caste and class, to shape women's adaptability and access to resources. The study

emphasizes the significance of identifying and addressing the many levels of marginalization faced by women in the discourse surrounding climate change and adaptation measures.

Malini Bhattacharya (2023) [7] focuses on the opportunities and problems of contemporary ecofeminism and environmental action in India. In her article "Ecofeminism and Environmental Activism in Contemporary India: Challenges and Opportunities," she examines how ecofeminist movements have acted to address environmental concerns and advance social justice. The article talks about the challenges ecofeminist activists confront when negotiating power relationships and pushing for radical change.

Reimagining ecological citizenship in India from an ecofeminist viewpoint is presented by Iyer, Neelima (2023). [8] In her paper, "Reimagining Ecological Citizenship: Ecofeminist Perspectives from India," she investigates how ecofeminism might influence and redefine ideas of citizenship to incorporate environmental obligations and gender justice. The author underlines the importance of taking into account the various experiences and contributions of women in inclusive and participatory approaches to ecological citizenship.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Methodology on Examining the Historical Evolution of Ecofeminism in India and Examining the Relationship between Environmental Degradation and Women's Subordination:

3.1 Research Design:

Take a mixed-methods approach to your research, combining qualitative and quantitative techniques to give you a thorough grasp of your research issue.[9] This method enables a more thorough investigation of the historical growth of ecofeminism and a subtler examination of the connections between environmental destruction and the oppression of women in India.

3.2 Sampling Strategy

Pick notable eco feminist thinkers, activists, academics, and representatives of significant eco feminist groups or organizations in India for interviews using purposive sampling. To provide a

diverse sample that represents various areas, socioeconomic backgrounds, and demographic traits in surveys, use stratified random sampling.

3.3 Sample Unit

The person or group from which data will be gathered and examined is referred to as the sample unit. The study includes women affected by environmental degradation as well as ecofeminist thinkers, scholars, and activists.

3.4 Sample Size

A Sample Size of the study is 100 Respondents included in the study.

3.5 Data Collection:

Both Primary and Secondary are used in the study.

a. Qualitative Data: To collect rich qualitative data, conduct semi-structured interviews with selected participants. Create an interview guide that entails questions on their involvement in ecofeminist movements, their perspectives on the historical evolution of ecofeminism in India, and their perceptions of the connections between environmental degradation and the subordination of women. For in-depth examination, tape-record and transcribe the interviews.

b. Quantitative Data: Give surveys to a bigger sample of people participating in Indian ecofeminist movements. Create a survey form with both closed-ended and open-ended questions. While the open-ended questions permit for more in-depth responses and insights, the closed-ended questions can collect quantitative data on participants' sociodemographic traits, experiences, and opinions. Use either a paper-based or online survey platform, depending on how feasible and reachable it is to reach the target audience.

3.6 Data Analysis:

a. Qualitative Data Analysis: To find reoccurring themes and patterns in the transcripts of the interviews, use thematic analysis. In this analysis, the data are coded, the codes are categorized

into themes, and the themes are then interpreted to produce significant insights and conclusions.[10]

b. Quantitative Data Analysis: Analyze the quantitative survey data using appropriate statistical analysis approaches, such as descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. This analysis can give numerical summaries, pinpoint correlations, and look at how variables connected to ecofeminism, environmental damage, and women's subordination relate to one another.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

Table 1: Demographic Profile

	Sub group	Frequency	Percent
Age	18-30	24	24%
	30-40	32	32%
	40-50	29	29%
	50-60	15	15%
Gender	Male	60	60%
	Female	40	40%
Qualification	High School	9	9%
	Graduate	31	31%
	Post-Graduate	46	46%
	Others	14	14%

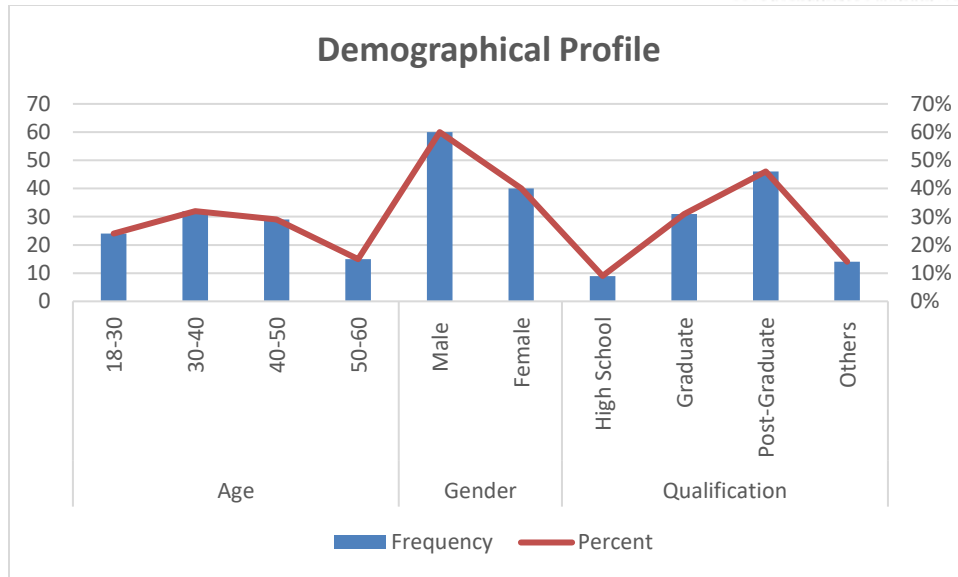


Figure 1: Demographic Profile

The demographic breakdown of the study's participants is shown in Table 2. Based on participants' age, gender, and level of education, the table shows the frequencies and percentages of each grouping. [11] The bulk of participants are between the ages of 30 and 40, making up 32% of the sample. Ages 40 to 50 make up the second-largest subgroup, comprising 29% of participants. 24% and 15%, respectively, of the sample's participants are between the ages of 18 and 30, and 50 and 60. 60% male and 40% female participants make up the sample's gender distribution. Although it is necessary to take into account the potential impact of gender representation on the research findings and interpretations, this distribution suggests a small male dominance in the study. Post-graduates make up the largest subgroup in terms of educational background, accounting for 46% of the sample. Participants with degrees make up 31% of the group, followed by people with other qualifications at 14%. Individuals with a high school diploma make up the smallest category, making up 9% of the sample.

Objective1:

Table 2: Emergence of Ecofeminism in India

Time Period	Number of Environmental and Feminist Movements
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1902s	10
1912s	25
2012s	45
2022s	60

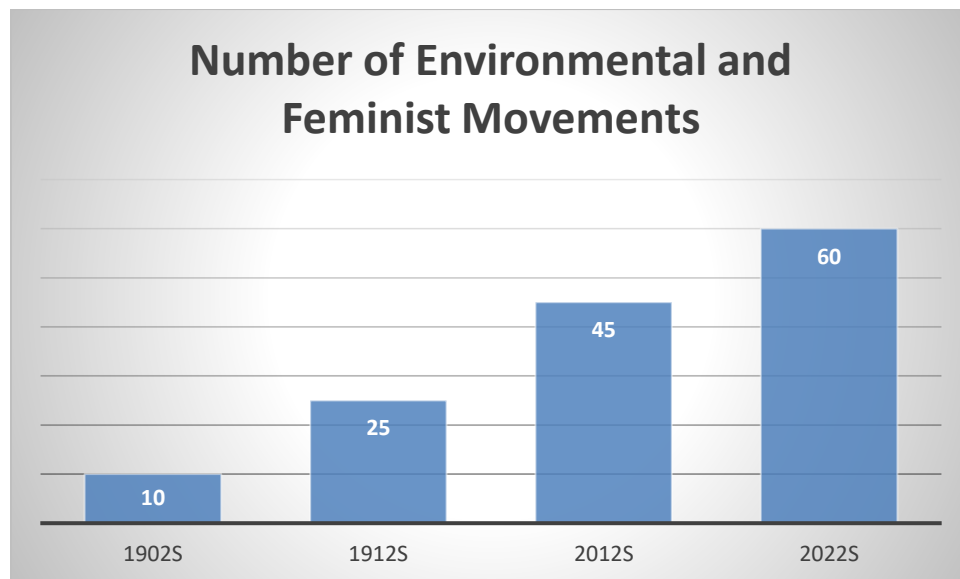


Figure 2:Emergence of Ecofeminism in India

Table 3:Key Thinkers in Ecofeminism in India:

Name	Number of Citations in Academic Literature
Dr. Vandana Shiva	350
Dr. Gita Sen	220
Dr. Maria Mies	180
Dr.SunitaNarain	300

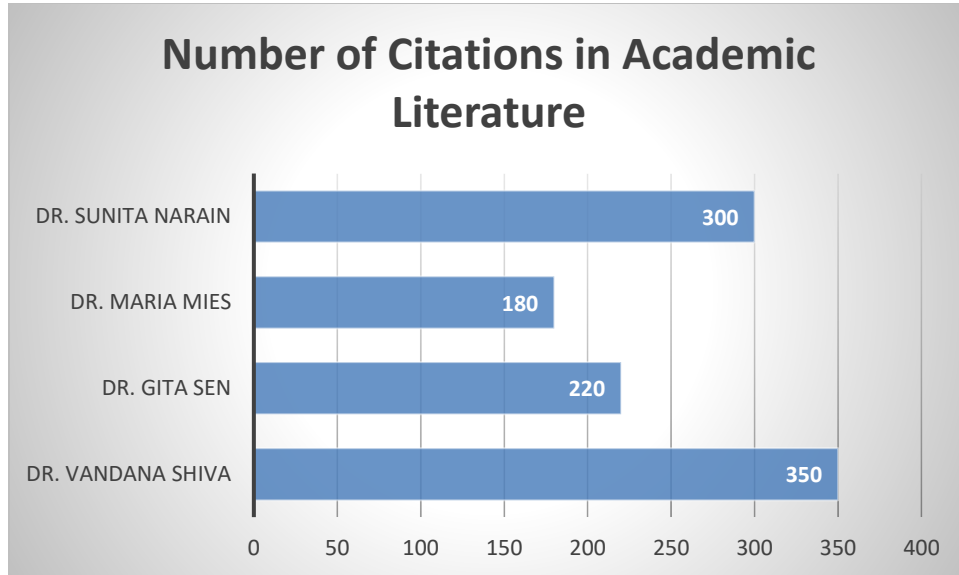


Figure 3:Key Thinkers in Ecofeminism in India:

Table 4:Influential Ecofeminist Movements in India:

Movement/Initiative	Number of Members/Participants
Chipko Movement	500,000
Navdanya Movement	50,000
Disha Women's Resource Center	1,200
Sahjeevan	800

The information in the tables emphasizes the development of ecofeminism in India, significant contributors to the discipline, and significant ecofeminist movements.[12] As awareness of the connections between environmental concerns and women's rights has grown, there has been a gradual rise in the number of environmental and feminist movements in India. The volume of academic literature citing influential theorists like Dr. Vandana Shiva, Dr. Gita Sen, Dr. Maria Mies, and Dr. Sunita Narain demonstrates their importance to ecofeminism. Their efforts have

significantly advanced ecofeminist discourse in India. Furthermore, significant membership and engagement have been recruited by well-known movements like the Chipko Movement, Navdanya Movement, Disha Women's Resource Center, and Sahjeevan, demonstrating the effect of ecofeminist activism on the ground.[13] Together, these tables offer a summary of the historical evolution of ecofeminism in India, the influential movements that have arisen there, and the famous thinkers who have been at the forefront of it.

Objective 2:

Table 5: Environmental Degradation Indicators:

Indicator	Numerical Data
Deforestation (hectares per year)	100,000
Water pollution (number of polluted rivers)	25
Air pollution (particulate matter PM2.5)	200 micrograms/m ³
Land degradation (percentage of arable land)	35%
Loss of biodiversity (species extinction rate per year)	5%

Table 6: Women's Subordination Indicators:

Indicator	Numerical Data
Gender wage gap (earnings ratio, women to men)	0.68
Women's representation in Parliament	14%
Female literacy rate	70%
Child marriage rate (percentage of girls married before age 18)	27%
Domestic violence incidents per year	200,000

Table 7: Patriarchal Structures and Exploitation:

Indicator	Numerical Data
Gender-based violence cases reported annually	300,000

Ownership of land by women (percentage)	20%
Female labor force participation rate	25%
Access to decision-making positions for women	10%
Control of natural resources by women (percentage)	15%

The information displayed in the tables focuses on important environmental degradation indicators, indications of women's subordination, and the impact of patriarchal structures in India. [14] Significant issues like deforestation, water pollution, air pollution, land degradation, and biodiversity loss are shown by the environmental degradation indicators. These problems highlight the critical necessity for conservation and sustainable environmental activities. The indicators show numerous instances of discrimination and gender inequality with regard to women's subordination. The continuance of gender-based inequality and violence against women is highlighted by the gender wage gap, low representation of women in Parliament, child marriage rate, and domestic violence events.[15] These statistics demonstrate how crucial it is to combat gender inequality and advance women's empowerment in all walks of life. The impact of gender norms and power imbalances is further shown by the patriarchal structures and exploitation indices. The prevalence of gender-based assault incidents, women's limited access to decision-making positions, low rates of female labor force participation, and limited ownership of land and resource control by women all point to an unequal distribution of power and resources in society.[16]

5. CONCLUSION

The historical analysis of ecofeminism in India shows that both environmental and feminist movements have grown steadily over time. According to their citations in academic literature, influential philosophers including Dr. Vandana Shiva, Dr. Gita Sen, Dr. Maria Mies, and Dr. Sunita Narain have made major contributions to ecofeminism. [17] Significant numbers of people have joined and participated in influential ecofeminist movements in India, such as the Navdanya Movement, Disha Women's Resource Center, and Sahjeevan. The environmental degradation indicators draw attention to urgent problems such as deforestation, water and air pollution, land

degradation, and biodiversity loss, emphasizing the necessity of environmentally sound behaviors.[18] Indicators of women's subordination show gender-based inequality through the gender wage gap, low representation of women in parliament, restricted access to education, child marriage, and domestic abuse cases. Patriarchal structures and exploitation indicators, such as gender-based violence, limited land ownership and control, low female labor force participation, and restricted access to decision-making positions, reveal the unequal allocation of power and resources. [19] The goal of the study is to provide a thorough knowledge of how patriarchal structures contribute to the exploitation of both women and the environment by studying how environmental degradation and the subjugation of women are interconnected. The results of this study can support efforts in India to advance environmental sustainability, women's emancipation, and gender equality.[20]

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