

# From Maternal Instincts to Planetary Care: Exploring Ecofeminist Ideals of Motherhood and Nature in Contemporary Women's Literature

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## Abstract

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*An interdisciplinary core concept known as ecofeminism asserts that because of how women and nature are viewed in society, ecological and women's issues are linked. It is understood that class disparities and a male-centric superiority are evidenced by the notions that the strong constantly eat meat and that plants and vegetables should be kept in mind for the dietary habits of living creatures lower in the ordered progression. By considering all stakeholders, who are typically marginalized in the structure of male-centric society, this study aimed to shed light on and supplement previous research on the topic by incorporating ecofeminism. One could say that ecofeminism aims to liberate women who are connected to the natural world, animals, and food in societies where man-centered societies still exist today. It also aims to recognize all oppressed sensitive beings as typical stakeholders without regard to their race, class, orientation, physical ability, or species, and to challenge consumption habits by eliminating all forms of oppression. In order to comprehend the harm done to beings viewed as inferior in the man-centric structure and to prevent these harms from being standardized and legitimized, it is generally believed that it is essential to understand the philosophical effects and thoughts hidden the idea of ecofeminism. Furthermore, scientific research on this topic should be increased.*

**Keywords:** *Maternal Instincts, Planetary Care, Exploring Ecofeminist Ideals, Motherhood, Nature, Contemporary Women's, Literature*

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## 1. Introduction

A subset of feminism known as ecofeminism prioritizes environmental issues and the interaction between women and the environment in both its theory and practice. The concept of orientation is used by ecofeminist theorists to dissect the connections between people and the everyday world. The French author Françoise d'Eaubonne coined the phrase in her 1974 book *Le Féminisme ou la Mort*. According to the ecofeminist theory, a feminist view of nature does not place women in a position of dominance, but rather argues for a populist, cooperative society in which there is no dominating group. Liberal ecofeminism, spiritual/social ecofeminism, social/socialist ecofeminism (or materialist ecofeminism), and social/socialist ecofeminism are some of the contemporary branches of the movement with varying approaches and interpretations. Interpretations of ecofeminism and how it could be used to further social ideas include current feminism, poetry, social justice and political theory, as well as ecofeminist activity.

Ecofeminist analysis looks at how women and nature are represented in writing, iconography, culture, and religion. It also discusses how the treatment of nature and the treatment of women share many similarities. These comparisons include, but are not limited to, the notion that women and nature are property, that men are the cultural curators and women are the natural world's curators, and that males dominate women and rule nature. The importance of respecting both women and nature is emphasized by ecofeminism. According to Charlene Spretnak, there are several ways to categorize ecofeminist writing: 1) Through the investigation of political theory and historical events; 2) Through belief in and investigation of nature-based faiths; and 3) Through environmentalism.

A theory known as ecofeminism has emerged from a variety of feminist activism and request movements, including the anti-nuclear, pro-natural, and pro-animals-and-the-environment movements. The fundamental tenet of ecofeminism, which draws on ideas from biology, feminism, and socialism, is that the philosophy that condones the oppression of nature is the same philosophy that condones the oppression of people on the basis of race, class, orientation, sexuality, physical ability, and species. According to ecofeminism, no effort to free women (or any other oppressed group) will be successful without a parallel effort to free nature. It calls

for an end to all forms of oppression. Its fictitious foundation is a concept of self that is related with all life and is typically expressed by women and other nondominant groups.

Socialists, creature liberationists, ecologists, and feminists all make a distinction between favored and oppressed groups in their analyses of oppression; the special groups are upper- or working-class humans who were mechanically and industrially "created," male, and the oppressed groups are nonhuman creatures who were "lacking" nature and women, respectively. Ecofeminism, a philosophy whose primary self/other distinction is founded on a concept of self that is separate and atomistic, identifies the structure that permits these forms of oppression as a male ruled society.

## **2. Literature Review**

Alaimo examines the transcorporeality theory as it pertains to feminist theory and its implications for comprehending how human bodies interact with the outside world. According to Alaimo, traditional dualisms that exclude humans from environment encourage ecological degradation and racial inequality. She puts out a set of transcorporeal feminisms that place a strong emphasis on interdependence and the trapping of both human and non-human bodies. Alaimo emphasizes the capacity of transcorporeal remembrance to challenge oppressive structures and promote moral relationships with environment through an analysis of ecofeminist writing.

The focus of Precious Stone's article is the regenerative justice system, particularly as it relates to women of variety. She criticizes the discourse that contrasts being supportive of a decision with being supportive of life, which typically ignores the astounding reality and intersecting experiences of underrepresented people. According to Precious Stone, conceptive justice broadens the discussion beyond the option to obtain fetal removal to include more complicated topics including healthcare, financial justice, and regional prosperity. Precious Stone emphasizes the need of recognizing and combating the overlapping oppressions that affect conceptual independence and the prosperity of undervalued communities by drawing on works created by women of various activists and researchers.

Gaard provides a fundamental examination of ecofeminism in this piece, highlighting the rejection of essentialist ideas and the re-conceptualization of species in feminist environmentalism. Gaard argues against essentialist ecofeminist approaches that ignore

intersectionality and the variety of human relationships with the climate and simplify women's encounters with nature. She is a supporter of a material feminist ecology that acknowledges the complexity of race, class, and sexual orientation in ecological challenges. Gaard proposes a more inclusive ecofeminist strategy that recognizes the organization and association, everything being equal, by relocating species within a social system.

The study by Kheel examines care ethics and how they relate to the realities of people with disabilities. She contends that a critical framework for comprehending the social and moral implications of disability is provided by care ethics, which places an emphasis on relationship, compassion, and responsibility. Kheel contends that traditional moral theories that emphasize individual autonomy and freedom ignore the social and idealized dimensions of care. Kheel shows how care ethics challenges conventional ideas of personhood by highlighting the experiences of people with disabilities and by providing alternative ways to think about dependency, weakness, and moral duty.

The connection of ecofeminism and feminist philosophy is examined in Ruether's section. She contends that man-centric institutions have intertwined and established the oppression of women and the control of nature. Ruether investigates the symbolic and social linkages between the mistreatment of the climate and the double-dealing of women by drawing on feminist and natural ideas. She talks about the common control logics that the two types of oppression share and asks for a revolutionary feminist biological spirituality that opposes these oppressive institutions.

Salleh's work explores the political aspects of ecofeminism by examining the relationships between postmodernism, nature, and the Marxian hypothesis. She contends that ecofeminism offers a crucial framework for comprehending and evaluating the current social, economic, and environmental issues. In order to address the entanglement of social and environmental issues, Salleh investigates ecofeminist critiques of capitalist systems and highlights the need to move past dualistic thinking. Salleh offers a comprehensive study of ecofeminist politics and its genuine potential for revolutionary change by fusing insights from postmodernism and the Marxist theory.

In-depth analysis of ecofeminist philosophy from a Western perspective is provided in Warren's work. She investigates the development of ecofeminism throughout history, its

philosophical underpinnings, and its implications for social justice and natural ethics. Warren highlights fundamental ideas in ecofeminist theory, including the examination of dualism, acceptance of interconnection, and the value of loving connections. She also discusses arguments and criticisms of ecofeminism, providing a balanced assessment of its benefits and drawbacks. Warren emphasizes the value and significance of ecofeminist philosophy in the context of current ecological debate through her evaluation of it.

### **3. Ecofeminism**

The ecofeminist philosophy focuses on the linkages between the dominance of women and the female body and the control of nature. These linkages, according to ecofeminist experts, include logical, linguistic, and symbolic. This trap is brought on by the "feminization" of nature and the "naturalization" of women. The feminization of nature can be seen in the management of common resources, the discovery and conquest of new lands, as well as when nature is regarded as a female force that sustains life on Earth. Simone de Beauvoir and Sherry B. Ortner, early feminist theorists, argued that women's liberation comes with their separation from nature, whereas more recent feminist theorists argue that this connection to mother earth should be cherished. Beauvoir's theories pushed women to break free of nature's shackles and take control of their status as the second sex. According to Beauvoir (1952), the reproductive capabilities of the female body and mothering responsibilities are alienating. Early views on ecofeminism's relationship to nature adhered to the nature/culture duality, and while some accepted this association, others rejected it. Three factors account for the widespread perception that women and nature are related: The female psyche is socialized for mothering, and as a result, has more social and substantial tendencies than men. These factors include 1) female psychology being closer to nature since they are birth-givers and nurturers, 2) the job of women having a place with the confidential sphere where they are surrounded by "creature like infants," and 3) the job of women having a place with the confidential sphere. Additionally, according to Ortner, women are in a "halfway" position, below men but above nature, and this "social reality" — the three reasons already mentioned — needs to be altered to allow women to be as social as men while escaping nature.

While the mother primary example is a universal representation, Stearney (1994) contends that adopting it as a comparison in ecofeminism restricts women and nature to merely their capacity

for regeneration. The continued male-centric idea that mothers are "regular, limitless, and exploitable" is what makes the mother prime example work. Four stages make up Stearney's analysis, the first of which examines ecofeminism's damaging use of the mother figure. The mother's original is powerful because it is a global symbol, but it is predicated on the notion that motherhood and womanhood are synonymous, and it links women's healing abilities to the cycles of nature. The same "ethics of care" that think it is women's responsibility to bore and maintain children are also social female qualities, and ecofeminist scholars describe how to cope with environmental difficulties in these ways. Women are capable of acquiring a natural disturbance and ensuring human life, but this is an extension of maternal responsibilities that still let women to reason according to regenerative norms and males according to destructive ones. These notions oversimplify the roles of women as mothers who, in a culture dominated by males, "give the entirety of our sustenance, free us of our waste products, satisfy our wants and needs as a whole, and capability as an exploitable, limitless, and self-sacrificing object." In addition, rather than approaching these challenges from the social, political, and financial frames they should be approached from, climate security and restoration are reduced to the ethics of care.

Based on ecofeminist views that disapprove of holding women and nature, Kuo (2017) makes parallels between the insurance of fetuses and the female body as a symbol of nature as further manifestations of this double-dealing. Examining Eastern and Western perspectives on early termination brings this to a close. Kuo makes the following claim: "[i]f the Earth can be compared to a woman's body, her uterus may be seen as the source of life." Christianity views women as inferior to men because they are more in tune with nature, and as such, as "needing administration," with the responsibility of domestic creation and propagation. According to Eastern philosophy, women are cursed with five pains. Pregnancy, labor, and menstruation are the three that have a connection to restorative powers. Comparing the female body's value to nature's ability to provide resources for life is comparable to thinking that a woman's worth is completely based on her ability to bear children. Kuo also draws a parallel between the protection and treatment of fetuses and the consideration of women's choices as being more important than the security of nature itself. Multiplication has historically been a possibility denied to women. Kuo uses concepts from Angela Davis to support his argument that the fetus is a representation of nature. Davis (1983) provides a historical overview of the development



of reproductive rights in the United States, the confluence of race and class, and the manipulation of women's conceptual systems, whether through the facilitation of restricted sterilizations on minority women or the denial of contraception to white women. Although there was a decline in the birth rate of white people in the early stages of contraceptive development, there was still no improvement in a potent form of conception prevention. Politicians who were affected by the eugenics movement viewed this as "race suicide". The development adopted a narrative arguing for the need for contraceptives to manage the lower-paying populations in response to arguments on the effects of restraining the development of the white race population. In order to maintain their financial and social wellbeing, it was believed that unlucky women had a duty to keep their families small. In the end, a legacy of racist and classist laws that protected preferred white infants and cast out undesirable minorities tainted the growth of women's rights for access to contraception. The insurance and dismissal of fetuses, as well as the treatment of some common resources as financially valuable while the security of nature is unrewarding, are all in accord with one another.

In the interim, Shipper (2013) clarifies two well-known approaches for the Western interpretation of nature while introducing the term "recuperation account". One strategy is the scriptural recovery where Adam and Eve fall from the splendor of God and are followed by efforts to recover the Garden of Eden. This strategy suggests that humans are involved in governing Earth. The second methodology postulates a decline from earlier societies that were more just and physiologically beneficial, and that these societies can be restored by sustainable practices. In any event, the second methodology just suggests that one for the climate and does not suggest human input.

It's interesting to note that Yates (2017) investigates how *Distraught Max: Rage Street* (2015) refutes the Edenic recovery account. Yates provides background on how various scholars have discussed the representation of nature as female and the sense of seeing women as closer to nature alluding to spiritual ecofeminism, despite the fact that this story typically presents nature and women as passive objects while male figures are dynamic subjects in *Wrath Street*.

## **4. Maternal Instincts and Nature**

### **4.1. Examination of the connection between motherhood and nature**

➤ **Nature as a metaphor for motherhood:**

Investigating the analogies and symbolism that exist between the nurturing traits of mothers and the nurturing features of nature.

➤ **Motherhood as a biological link to the natural world:**

Examining the relationship between the biological processes of pregnancy, delivery, and lactation with the natural cycles and rhythms.

➤ **Cultural and historical perspectives:**

Examining the ways that myths, folklore, and conventional beliefs have been used to explore how different cultures and society have connected motherhood with nature.

#### 4.2. Exploration of how maternal instincts can extend to environmental concerns

➤ **Protective instincts:**

Looking at the environment as a collectively nurturing area for future generations, we might examine how a mother's drive to protect and take care of her kid can extend to the desire to do the same for the environment.

➤ **Interconnectedness:**

Examining how women become involved in environmental activism and advocacy as a result of the realization that children's health is intimately entwined with the health of the natural world.

➤ **Intergenerational responsibility:**

Examining how moms might experience a greater sense of obligation to leave their offspring a sustainable and healthy planet, motivating them to pursue choices that are good for both their close relatives and the larger ecological community.

➤ **Emotional connection:**

Examining the emotional connection that mothers have with their children and how that connection may lead to a desire to conserve and preserve the natural environment.



Contemporary women's literature contributes to a deeper understanding of ecofeminism and its objectives by examining the relationship between maternity and nature as well as how maternal instincts may extend to environmental concerns.

## **5. Motherhood as a Source of Empowerment**

### **5.1. Depiction of motherhood as a catalyst for women's empowerment**

#### **➤ Redefining traditional narratives:**

Modern women's literature challenges preconceived ideas about parenthood by presenting moms as complex characters with agency, goals, and room for personal development.

#### **➤ Maternal strength and resilience:**

Investigating how parenting might help women develop their inner resilience and fortitude, empowering them to face hardships and defy social expectations.

#### **➤ Transformation and self-discovery:**

Demonstrating how the experience of becoming a mother can be transforming for women, resulting in self-discovery and a reassessment of their responsibilities and goals.

### **5.2. Examples of women reclaiming their agency through their role as mothers**

#### **➤ Maternal activism:**

Depicting women who fight against unjust institutions and push for change by drawing on their experiences as mothers and their maternal instincts.

#### **➤ Balancing motherhood with personal aspirations:**

Showcasing mothers who embrace their parenting obligations while still pursuing their ambitions and objectives, proving that the two positions are not incompatible.

#### **➤ Building supportive communities:**

Illustrating how moms join together to create supportive groups, giving one another the confidence to question cultural standards and reinvent their roles beyond what is expected of them.

➤ **Reclaiming autonomy and bodily sovereignty:**

Examining stories where mothers recover their rights by asserting their autonomy over their bodies and reproductive decisions, posing a threat to patriarchal rule.

Contemporary women's literature emphasizes the transformational impact of motherhood via these depictions as well as the ways in which women may recover their agency, defy social norms, and contribute to their own emancipation.

## **6. Critique of Patriarchy and Capitalism**

### **6.1. Analysis of how patriarchy and capitalism contribute to the exploitation of both women and nature**

➤ **Exploitation of women:**

Discussing how patriarchal institutions exacerbate gender disparities and cause women to be marginalized and oppressed. This involves uneven access to resources, a lack of decision-making authority, and a devaluing of roles and activities that are traditionally associated with women.

➤ **Exploitation of nature:**

Examining how capitalism systems use the exploitation and destruction of natural resources as a means of maximizing profit and economic expansion at the expense of environmental sustainability. This encompasses ecological issues such as climate change and deforestation as well as pollution, ecosystem destruction, and depletion.

### **6.2. Examination of how literature exposes the interconnectedness of these systems**

➤ **Ecofeminist perspectives:**

Examining the ways in which literature may serve as a forum for ecofeminist criticisms, showing the linkages between the exploitation of nature and the oppression of women, and demonstrating how these systems feed off of one another.

➤ **Symbolism and metaphors:**

Examining how symbols and metaphors are used in literature to draw comparisons between the exploitation of nature as a resource for human use and the objectification and commodification of women.

➤ **Intersectional analysis:**

Recognizing that, depending on intersecting aspects like race, class, and ethnicity, capitalism and patriarchy have diverse effects on various groups of women and the environment. Literature may present a variety of viewpoints and illuminate these intricate linkages.

Contemporary women's literature adds to the greater discussion on ecofeminism and encourages a deeper awareness of the interdependence of these systems by highlighting the negative effects of patriarchy and capitalism on both women and environment. It challenges repressive systems that support social and environmental justice by encouraging readers to think critically and act.

## **7. Conclusion**

An interdisciplinary theory called ecofeminism asserts that man-centered society tend to devalue nature and women while gaining power. According to this theory, dualities and hierarchies are the most obvious characteristics of civilizations dominated by men. The system grants males, culture, and intellect primacy and allows them to dominate women, nature, and emotions. The merger and linkage of feminist and natural currents of thought has given rise to ecofeminism, which is a philosophy, an ethic, and a development in the world. According to this development, which has the strong backing of Vandana Shiva, who founded an Indian sanctuary for agro-biodiversity and the wild, where women hold a key position, there are parallels between the normal causes of control and women's oppression and a lack of respect for nature, both of which contribute to ecological destruction. Ecofeminism promotes the power of nature and women, hence highlighting the need for a more linked viewpoint. It strives

to develop awareness and a sense of "justice for everybody and everything" in society using this viewpoint and its fundamental methods.

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