

**“A Quest for Identity: An Eco-Feminist Exploration of the Major Novels
of Nadine Gordimer and Kamala Markandaya”**

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CHAPTER 5

Conclusion

The present research aims at establishing a healthy earth. The earth which harbors life is gradually turning lifeless. The degrading condition of the earth is quite alarming. Both biotic and abiotic elements of nature are seriously affected by patriarchal norms. There are eminent evidences of disharmony in both natural and social world where man is an integral part. To restore the health of earth and to rejuvenate the social system the very ecofeminist philosophy has emerged. Ecofeminism connotes harmonious sustainability of every creature. The nature- culture dualism and other divisive social strategies are to be uninstalled. Nature and natural processes should be given adherence. Nadine Gordimer and Kamala Markandaya have a common agenda in their narratives, which is to recuperate the society from binaries. The selected texts of both the writers in this research canvass various trajectories of a distorted society. Both the writers hailing from two different continents presented social deformities caused by patriarchy. A common factor observed in both the writers' works is a healthy society depends upon a healthy environment. Nature culture dualism is an unethical practice. Both the writers advocate a holistic and synchronized living by chastising it through their writings. All the preferred texts in this research demonstrate various brutalities casted upon nature, women and indigenes. Since antiquities man has been exploiting nature for his survival. It did turn into a perpetual habit of man to oppress it. But excessive turning and twisting of natural matrix has landed entire human civilization in a state of danger. The planet earth has undergone a great deal of change and still continuing with the process of change. These changes are nothing but an undesirable outcome of human conducts. These conducts have already shown the glimpses of apocalypses.

Man, the father of patriarchal concept has controlled one and all natural and social atmosphere. It has given birth to various strategies to consolidate its own position. Sexism, racism, classism and speciesism are some of the social matrix through which patriarchy dissects the society and empowers itself. These systems have turned parameters to create inferiority among mass. Anthropocentric approach is to be altered by humanistic approach. The selected texts of Nadine Gordimer in particular and other works in general have idealized humanistic approach towards the world. Her texts give a clear cut vision of imbalance which persisted in social sphere of South Africa. Giving adherence to culture by subsiding nature is an androcentric/anthropocentric practice. This kind of practice gives less importance to women and nature. This is possible because man keeps himself above other creatures by distinguishing himself culturally. South Africa's apartheid system is nothing but a cultural design. The texts of Gordimer widen our ideas regarding the atrocities the black Africans have undergone. This rising rift within a society is just for the sake of imposing a particular identity on another. The white colonizers imposed their culture on the black indigenes of Africa. This kind of situation arises when a particular identity assesses itself more than other existing identity. A quest for identity is seen among the black Afrikaners because they were identified as the lesser breed and tagged as savages. The inhuman treatment shown to the black Africans is quite agonizing. The unacceptance of a particular human breed led to a tremendously powerful political structure named as apartheid. Apartheid policies were so brutal that it was hardly tolerable for the blacks. The native Africans could realize an identity crisis in their lives. This initial realization of identity crisis metamorphosed into a quest for identity. Rosa Berger's initiation to guide the black movement is an instance of the quest for identity. Hillela,

despite being a white Afrikaner involved herself in blacks' struggle for liberation. To take a stand for a right cause is humanistic attitude. The Smales couple too creates a better example by establishing a good equation with the black servant. In these stories ecofeminist traits can certainly be marked. Ecofeminism is profounded by the concept of equality of all living beings. Irrespective of any physical identity every individual has a right to live with dignity.

Similar is the experience with Kamala Markandaya's writings. Being a female she could connect herself to nature-women bond. She centralized her ideations by being a practical perceiver of reality. She observed the varied ways of women-nature oppression. She synthesized through her works that women are more connected to nature than that of men. The nurturing capacity is quite instinctive in both women and nature and this capacity connects them well. Bearing capacity can never be separated from the virtue of compassion and this compassion is culturally tagged as feminine. Women and nature are identified as feminine because of their bearing capacity. The patriarchal world exploits both women and nature because they are identified as lesser breed that is just meant to serve them. The reciprocation of Rukmani with nature defines the feminine bond of women and nature. Women not only bother about her family but also care for the surrounding. The environment Rukmani was surrounded with bothered her the most. Both biotic and abiotic elements attracted her attention. She not only bothered about air, water and cleanliness but also bothered about the domestic animals and birds around her house. The golden sunshine, bright sky and the chirruping birds filled her heart with joy. Later on the establishment of tannery faded the natural charm. She could easily differentiate the changes in the environment. It is a general phenomenon among the women that they are quite sensitive

about their surroundings. If something is wrong in the surrounding women get affected by that, whereas men take an inert stand and are more bothered to make a change in the surrounding. This kind of response gives scope for nature culture dualism. Women are more inclined towards nature whereas men are the emblem of culture. This nature culture dualism gives birth to hierarchies in the societies. These hierarchies are not only harmful for the natural world but also for the social world. Mellor differentiates between nature and culture more convincingly in the text *Feminism and Ecology*. As per her logic,

Woman emerges both individually and historically out of first nature in such a way that allows woman to develop an enhanced, often implicit awareness of our interconnected relationship to the natural world. For many different biological and social reasons, male second nature did not historically fulfill its potential for developing this primary awareness. (163)

This detachment of man towards nature is not natural rather it is a cultural mindset. Men try to assert their identity by oppressing other identities. In *The Coffey Dams*, we see Clinton's assertiveness over the river and his wife Helena. He tried to tame both nature and woman in his life. His attempt to deviate the natural course of river for the construction of dams is an example of male dominance. Clinton not only tried to control the river but also tried to control the actions of his wife. Helena's escape to the rustic areas was unacceptable for him. Because Clinton opined that Helena belonged to a civilized section and her mingling with uncivilized indigenes was undesirable. Helena though restricted by her husband's words couldn't control her conscience. Her sense of oneness with nature and indigenes dragged her many times to the remote villages. She could relate herself to the brown skinned people. She could inculcate the nurturing capacity of nature within her.

These all aspects of the text justify the dogmas of ecofeminism. Ecofeminism, an amateur philosophy among other philosophies has reinstated the connection between women and nature. It has emerged with the very ambition to reinstall the lost glory of nature and women. Nature is being stripped of her naturalness. Its natural processes are made more complex by man on the edge of making it simpler. To make nature user friendly men developed many development hubs which actually adversely affect men's world.

Ecofeminism not only speaks for women and nature it also bothers for poor people. Nature which is a combination of both living beings and the supportive world should be taken care as a whole. The survival of the earth depends upon the perfect equation of both biotic and abiotic elements. Abiotic elements support the life system hence man as the rational and efficient of all living beings should take care of abiotic and biotic world. From the current research it is also evident that both the writers have a sympathetic consideration towards the animal world. Animals are domesticated and commercialized for the benefit of human civilization. The ill treatment the animals receive at the hand of humans is unimaginable. Ecofeminism also believes in restoring the safety of animal world. Commercialization of animal for the sake of profit is an unethical practice. Animals do support the human world. They do connect emotionally to the humans. These phenomena are evident when we see mother of Lalitha and Saroja taking care of the buffalos in the novel *Two Virgins*. Whether it is establishment of tannery in *Nectar in a Sieve* or rumbling of buffalos in pain in *Two Virgins*, it is marked that the female protagonist getting connected to the speechless animals' sufferings. The description of rustic villages in *The Coffer Dams* where the piglets, cheeks and other domestic animals are found scattered around the huts. The women taking care of these animals are found often worried about the well-being of these animals.

Though not an ecofeminist by nature Kamala Markandaya's novels are marked with ecofeminist principles.

In the process of inventions and experiments researchers and scientists take animals such as guinea pigs, rats and monkeys as the objects of experiments. Chemicals and toxic elements are first experimented on these creatures and the desired result of which makes it user-friendly for the human society. Enormous wealth, time and energy are spent to find solutions of deadly diseases. Cancer is one of those remarkable and fatal diseases which has no permanent solutions. To find a proper antidote or preventive of cancer, various institutions are spending millions of dollars in research. Thousands of species are experimented with a probable preventive. Not necessarily the desired outcome can be useful for human beings. Various physicians have challenged the practice of experimenting animals in medical research for finding solutions for human illness. In certain countries the doctors have rejected animal research as unscientific. Sometimes human body responds adversely to the implied research which has already been experimented with animals. An article published in *The Indian Express* says about the research on animals. Cheryl F. Scott, a researcher at the Thrombosis Research Centre at Temple University, expressed in a journal *The Physiologist* regarding his medical research. As per his research:

As we become sophisticated in our technology and investigate at a molecular level, we find more differences in analogous proteins between species instead of finding more similarities... The point is that knowledge gained from animal research needs ultimately to be applied to human clinical situations and in many instances, it cannot. This not only results in the sacrifice of

hundreds of animals, but the misleading of scientific thought as well as hindrance of progress. (16)

Probably our failure to tackle cancer is the outcome of the research based on animals. Cancer has turned a rampant phenomenon among the mass. As referred in *The Silent Spring* Rachel Carson has synthesized that one in every four human beings suffers from cancer in the world. This is because of excessive use of toxins in day to day life. The cancer death rate is escalating rapidly. There is a remarkable increase of 20% cancer mortality rate in current years. American Cancer Society and the National Cancer Institute of America spend millions of dollars per day for finding solutions to it. But these researches can't be fruitful unless and until use of toxins are minimized or banned.

The random usage of toxic chemicals in animal farming factories has serious health implications. The animals which are reared for the purpose of farming are injected with antibiotics, protein and different chemicals to make them fat and fit for profit. Those chemicals get absorbed in their bodies. Humans consume these animals and incur those toxins into their own bodies. This is how the chemical residues are found in human beings. Researchers have proved that more than 140 kinds of drugs and pesticides' residues are found in raw meat, poultry and dairy products. Out of those hundreds of chemicals more than 40 chemicals are known as carcinogenic. Apart from those there are certain other chemicals which can cause serious health hazards. Health hazards such as birth defects and cardio vascular problems. The consumption of meat and other animal products are the main reason behind such health risks. The meat producing industries have defended commercialization of animal as a benefit to the human society. For these business centers animal husbandry is a perpetual thing. It reflects a sense of patriarchal idea that animals are

born to serve the human civilization. And in this process of business to multiply the profit man injects poison to these animals. In this business strategy men forget the fact that they are the worst affected in the food chain. Objectification of animals in the name of growth and development is an unethical practice. Mute and innocent creatures are victims of human knowledge. In some cases we see an adverse impact of these experiments.

Extinctions have turned rampant. Ecofeminism do give emphasis on the well being of animal world. Animals are very much important for a healthy ecology. Their extinction affects the ecology adversely. Ecofemism which can be defined as ecological feminism draws link between the oppression of women and nature. It has analyzed all aspects of oppression undertaken on women, animals, natural surroundings and poor people.

For the survival of the entire living world it is our prime responsibility to take care of the abiotic elements such as air, water and soil. Human conducts have a wild range of impacts on these elements. The escalating rate of pollution in current world scenario has turned into a matter of major concern. Climatic changes are resultant of human actions. Rapid increase in temperature, change in climatic condition, ozone layer depletion and acidification of rain are the devastating outcomes of human actions. The green house gases emitted by industries, factories and other domestic sources are responsible for the increase in the temperature of earth. Ozone layer depletion is linked with the rise in the green house gases. A recent research article published in The Indian Express on 25th May 2018 states that earth may become 4° warmer by 2084. This research is quite alarming. As per the researcher, Dabang Jiang of Chinese Academy of Sciences:

The Earth's average temperature may increase by four degrees Celsius, compared to pre-industrial levels, before the end of 21st century, a study

claims. This increase translates to more annual and seasonal warming over land than over the ocean, with significant warming in the Arctic, researchers said. “A great many record-breaking heat events, heavy floods, and extreme draughts would occur if global warming crosses the four degrees Celsius level, with respect to the pre-industrial period. The temperature increase would cause severe threat to ecosystems, human systems, and associated societies and economies. (16)

These kinds of researches are based on facts. We do experience environmental changes to a greater extent in our day to day life. Due to global warming, we see drastic climatic changes. The increase in temperature affects not only human beings but also plants and animals. Excessive heat leads to water scarcity. It is estimated that water is going to be acutely scarce in upcoming days. Due to Global Warming, we see uneven distribution of rain resulting in floods and droughts in various patches of the earth. Cyclones, hurricanes, earthquakes, floods and famine are frequent in many countries and cities destroying millions of human lives and wealth. A research in Monash University in Melbourne states that heat waves will be deadlier in future. Deaths caused by severe heat wave will increase drastically by 2080, particularly in countries located near the equator such as India, if we fail to counter climate change. Increase in temperature is caused by rise in greenhouse gases, which is once again related to the rise of density of world's population. Huge increase in human population is responsible for all kinds of environmental disorders. Whether it is extreme weather conditions or rise in pollution, human conducts are to be held solely responsible. Human beings are reaping their conducts. Extreme increase or decrease in temperature leads to disease severity in various

forms. A research article published in risk analysis suggests that: heat and cold waves affect people with certain health conditions such as cardio vascular and respiratory diseases. It has also pointed out that extreme heat is risky for people with renal diseases. Apart from that extreme air pollution may cause severe lungs infection. Even a little exposure to tiny air pollutants develops acute lower respiratory infection. Bronchiolitis is a medical condition in which small breathing tubes of lungs are infected and clogged with mucus. Various respiratory diseases depend upon the level of pollutants in the air. The air pollution even weakens the immunity system of human body and makes it more vulnerable. People in mega cities are mostly affected by Alzheimer. Alzheimer is basically prominent in polluted environments. It affects children very easily. Human beings irrespective of age and gender are equally suffering from various health deformities. Animals are even affected by the climatic changes. The fluctuation in temperature disrupts their habitat. Toxic pollutions and climatic changes are the major reasons behind the extinction of numerous species. Genesists, environmentalists and biodiversity conservationists have drawn a conclusion that the most affecting reasons of extinctions are toxicity and global warming. Rapid melting of glaciers in the Arctic has risen the sea levels. It is affecting the sea ecosystem as well. In a recent study published in *Antarctic Science*, the king penguin species-a heavy bird and a beautiful species is going to be wiped out in near future. Due to the impact of climate change scientists have marked a remarkable decrease in glacier levels which is affecting the penguins' natural habitat. Similarly, every species is suffering due to the lack of adequate food and habitat. Humans' development hunt has actually destroyed the natural balance. Biodiversity which is essential for the healthy survival of earth is affected by human conducts. Man forgets the

fact that man as a species is also a part of biodiversity. For his own survival biodiversity is necessary.

Ecofeminism as a grass root movement asserts its stand to dispel all kinds of disparities such as sexism, racism, classism and speciecism. It believes in affirming the rights and harmonious living of both natural and social world globally. Oppression casted on the basis of nature, culture, class, gender and breed has turned extreme. For establishment of equal rights and fellow feeling, ecofeminism has unfolded itself. Human relationship towards its natural environment and social environment needs correction. We have many theories and philosophies which speak for the cause of environment such as environmentalism, ecocentrism, ecosophy and naturism. Theologians, philosophers and scientists have justified in different levels that the earth needs protection now. It has turned high time to convert the theories into practice. Specialists from every sphere starting from space to the core of earth have declared the detrimental effects of human intervention in natural system. The magnitude of disintegration is so vast that it surely indicates a disastrous end of the living world unless it is realized by each and every individual to contribute a bit for revival. In this diverse evolution process man is the ultimate creation. Man must realize his importance not in an egocentric manner rather in a bio-centric manner because his own survival depends upon a healthy maintenance of biodiversity. Man has always taken advantage of its superiority over other creatures. Since the beginning of human civilization man has made use of natural surroundings and other living beings. He has identified the rest of the world except him as other. Even the counter part of man such as woman and other fellow man are not treated equally by him. Man identifies himself as the superior and rest of the world as inferior. Other identities are referred as

subalterns. Feminism or sexism came up for the cause of women identity. In different phases of feminism it can be realized all identity crisis can be dealt with one weapon that is ecofeminism. Ecofeminism in a lucid definition is known as ecological feminism. Every living and nonliving identity is to be valued. For that first and foremost we need to take care of the abode we are residing in. We need the earth-based spirituality. In ancient times nature was treated reverentially. The earth was treated as goddess who was sumptuous and fulfilling. Like a caring mother earth took care of everything as its own children. It is judicious to revive those practices unless and until we start valuing earth, we cannot take care of it. It is emphatic to identify the oneness of the earth with us. Judith Plant has quoted in the text *Healing the Wounds* the vibrance of earth which can be recuperated by us. According to her earth, the Mother Nature is expropriated, amputated and raped. Its body is cut apart, wounded and left in a helpless state. It cannot revive unless and until human beings start taking care of her. She can bounce back with all her glory. As per the writer's connotation:

Towards the south, through the center
 of a still brown patch of weeds,
 a living green line,
 like marble dividing stone,
 cuts the hill, a caesarian section
 from the navel to pubic bone.
 Scar on the belly of my mother
 Where I tore her open.

Across the canyon, a rock face
has been split into labia
and there are hundreds of buttocks and hips,
breasts cut with a water knife
from the body rock.

Here is the winter knot
before it's cut into spring.

In my belly,

The stone of lights
split open,
something green emerged
and exploded into a thousand arms.

The grass has come again,
Insidious spring over the disguised rock,
the mustard returns and the lupine bruise
in the raw, scabrous wind,
now acacia, bees, moths, ants, birds
ground out of uterine stone.

This is the order:

green, earth, stone, sulphur, bedrock, fire.

Peace and trembling

throughout the body of the Mother. (*Healing the wounds* 126)

People across the globe have started to identify the grave problems related to ecology. They have also realized a harmonious natural environment will surely help to build a harmonious society. Conferences, seminars, insightful discussions and researches are carried out by different groups and institutions both globally and locally. United Nations Organization keeps repeating about environmental concerns in various summits. Countries across the globe participate in them to strategize the means to recuperate earth's condition. Many MoU's have been signed among countries to fight to allround social and ecological issues unanimously. Poor countries are funded by the organizations to carry out various ecological and social campaigns. Countries are implementing various laws and insightful sessions for the awareness of environmental and social concerns. Various institutions campaign for ecocentric values. Holy rivers in India like Ganga and Narmada are considered to be the most polluted rivers in the world. To clean Ganga various government and non-government sponsored programs have been launched. People have realized the consequences of various kinds of pollution around them. They are conscious of the fact that they have to preserve the earth for the upcoming generations. Plastic free planet campaigns are evident. To protest against use of toxins in agriculture and farming are also seen. Clear awareness programs are launched for harmonious living with nature. But despite these efforts we are far behind in coping up with the intensity of situation. We have tons of theories but we have hardly any sincere efforts to convert those theories into

practice. This rejuvenation process needs united participation. Every individual must contribute towards the social and ecological balance. Social and ecological harmony is objectively correlated. One is unthinkable without the other. Ecofeminism offers insightful and superficial theories to dispel ecological and social issues. But those theories are limited to pen and paper. Ecofeminism can widen its ambit by including improvisation strategies and mainstream planning structures. It must also innumerate implementation programmes and practice by further qualitative and quantitative research on both social and ecological grounds. Sometimes it feels impossible to go reverse to the process of development. Now in a global sphere it is impossible to say no to business sectors and industrialization. Escalating global population require infrastructure for the construction of which nature gets sacrificed somehow or other. It is impossible to go reverse from the present state of human civilization once again. But it is possible indeed to make environmental projects eco-friendly. There should be developmental projects on a condition which should be a sustainable one. Industries and factories are to be established not from a profitable point of view rather each should serve the humanity without hampering the nature. Adequate numbers of waste management hubs are to be maintained. Pollutants are not to be released in an unprocessed state into the environment. The doctrinal of ecofeminism is crystal clear. Establishment of equal rights for individual identities is its primary objective. Ecofeminism recognizes the identity of every class, creed, culture, gender and species. Further researches on identity crisis and quest can be approached more scientifically through ecofeminism. Both the writers' texts of this research have defended the norms of ecofeminism.

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