

CHAPTER TWO

ECOFEMINISM AND SOCIAL ECOLOGY

The Previous chapter has been an attempt at exploration and examination as to the proximity of Ecofeminism and Deep Ecology. In this chapter we shall propose to address in what sense ecofeminism is identified with social ecology. There is no question of doubt that like ecofeminism, social ecology, an endeavour towards environmentalism also deals with ecological and environmental issues. However, social ecology in its various approaches can be identified with ecofeminism. It will be worthwhile to mention here that there are considerable discrepancies between social ecology and ecofeminism, but still they share significant similarities that make it appropriate to examine them in one sequel. Murray Bookchin is a leading proponent of social ecology. Social ecology relatively consists of a unified theoretical perspective and as such it involves the basic entegories, i.e. the awarness of the biophysical and socio cultural domains juxtaposing the ecological infrastructure to the economy, polity, social structure and culture. Ecofeminism, on the other hand, reflects the diversity that exists among feminist thinkers. Ecofeminism, therefore, is considered as a general perspective on ecological issues rather than a unified theory of ecophilosophy. Arguably, ecofeminism involves the use of any of the diverse philosophies in the analysis of ecological issues. Since ecofeminism is attached with feminist issues and feminist philosophy involves many different outlooks, there we have many different forms of ecofeminism. But what is important to note here is that amidst all these things of ecofemism and social ecology and the various outlooks within ecofeminism have important homogeneity. This is what we propose to address and establish in this chapter.

To explore the similarities between ecofeminism and social ecology one can distinguish two aspects of social ecology and ecofeminism each of which includes analytic aspects that offer analyses of the causes and issues underlying the contemporary ontological crises. Barring the analytic aspect, each of them has also programmatic aspects that offer alternative versions of an ecological sound future. As far as ecological problems are concerned, both social ecology and ecofeminism share common approach. Both refer to research questions as to the role of traditional institutions in mediating human interactions with nature. For example, did the division of labour between the sexes in different peasant and tribal communities give rise to fundamentally different attitudes towards nature on the part of women? Again, what were the responsibilities of caste and village institutions in regulating the use of forests, water and other common resources? What have been the effects of recent environmental degradation on gender relations, or on the autonomy of the caste and the village? Each of ecofeminism and social ecology sees that the ecological destructions are related to social problems of control and dominance. However, they differ only in addressing or giving specific explanations concerning social problems and also for their programmes for social change. Moreover, social ecology and ecofeminism also take care of society to find the underlying causes of the environmental crisis. Like Deep Ecology, they do not, however, identify the roots of ecological destruction as a dominant philosophy of anthropocentrism. Deep Ecology, as we have seen, is predominantly concerned with factors that are too abstract (metaphysical) and too general (nature knows best). It ignores the specific human and social causes of domination and environmental destruction. Unlike Deep Ecology, ecofeminism and social ecology deny that human centeredness is the necessary cause of environmental destruction. Instead of that what they rather specify human

institutions and practices as more critical and crucial. Deep Ecology gives much emphasis on the issues relating to wilderness and ignores the human costs and consequences arising out of the destruction of environment. Both ecofeminism and social ecology do not agree on the conviction that the fundamental cause of degradation and depredation of nature in relation to human beings lies only in the failure of traditional ethics, rather they hold that traditional theories of social justice can be adequate for analyzing environmental problems as such social justice is the primary focus of both social ecology and ecofeminism.

Ecofeminists and social ecologists are emphatically of the opinion that the root of our ecological crises hinges on certain social factors. Accordingly, the domination and degradation of nature crop up from social patterns of domination and hierarchy, patterns of social life in which some humans exercise domination and subjugation over others (May be the males or the assumed higher sections of the particular society). Obviously, both approaches tend to shift philosophical attention into a new direction. Philosophical questions are traditionally amalgamated or confederated with metaphysics and ethics. But here both the approaches under consideration have tried to shift philosophical questions and attentions towards social and political philosophy instead of metaphysics and ethics. Instead of metaphysics and ethics, social justice becomes the primary focus of these philosophers. Thus, the prime task of this view is to dig up the relation between individual humans and the patterns of social organizations in which they live in. There underlies no question of doubt that societies are the outcome or creations of human beings. Human beings have organized and structured societies in order to fulfil their ends. Thus when we are looking forward or examining environmental

destruction as a social problem we should ask about the ends generated by the particular institutions or cultures causing the problems.

To be argumentative, the most pertinent question in this regard is to ask not what society does for peoples, but what a particular society does to the people. We have to identify who are benefiting from and who are being harmed or oppressed by our social practices. Both social ecologists as well as ecofeminists are of the opinion that there are social structures which are set up to oppress and exploit some members of society for the benefit of others. These types of social structures are called oppressive structure which indulge or encourage the domination and subjugation in all forms including the domination of the biotic community. Bookchin, a celebrated social ecologist, himself narrates the point by saying – “The very notion of domination of nature by men stems from the real elimination of human by human.”¹⁶ The same view has been expressed by Radford Reuther. He says, “Women must see that there can be no liberation for them and no solution to the ecological crisis within a society in which fundamental relationship continues to be of domination. They must unite the demands of the women’s movement with those of the ecological movement to envision a radical reshaping of the basic socio-economic relations and the underlying values of this society.”¹⁷

The man-environment relationship is as old as human existence itself. Traditionally man used natural resources wisely and nurtured nature as a sustainer. This ensured sustainability of nature. This scene is no more observed. Thus it can be said that ecological destruction and depredation is a form of human domination. It is a form of domination of nature. Thus, we need to apprehend first of all the general patterns of human domination of other humans. Accordingly, an adequate understanding of the ecological crisis must

¹⁶ Bookchin, M. *Ecology of freedom*, Black Rose Books, Montreal, 1991, P-1.

¹⁷ Reuther, R.R. *New Earth*, New York, Scabary, 1975, P-204.

address fundamental questions of social and political philosophy. So the prime task is to examine and address the fundamental questions of social and political philosophy. We must identify and analyse the patterns of domination and oppression within societies and evaluate these patterns in terms of philosophical accounts of justice in which all biotic communities are free from oppression and domination. As such the relevance of environmental justice is taken into account.

Environmental Justice:

We have already observed and pointed out that there are various ways through which social ecology and ecofeminism can be differentiated. Social ecologists apprehend environmental destruction in general and widespread forms of domination and hierarchy. This includes social practices, structures, private ownership, capitalism and even nation state. These social practices and institutions establish social hierarchies in which some humans exercise power and domination over others. Social ecologists therefore propose a solutional method, an anarchist conception of justice in which human freedom is supposed to be an essential feature of justice. This is justified because it tends to annihilate external control and psychological manipulation. Ecofeminists, on the contrary, identify the oppression of women as a principal form of social domination. It addresses much close proximity between the domination of women and the domination of nature. Consequently, it has been felt that the objective of the feminist movement by and large is at par with the objective of the ecological movement since the oppression of women refers to multifaceted factors of the patriarchal society. Ecofeminists, therefore, offers various accounts of social justice for uplifting alternative non-domination forms of society. Karrew Warren says, "they concern about connections ... historical, empirical, conceptual, theoretical, symbolic and experimental, conceptual, theoretical, symbolic and experimental between the domination of

women and the domination of nature. According to ecofeminists, a failure to see these connections will result in the continued exploitation of both women and non-human nature in the development policies, theory and practices which is grossly inadequate from a feminist point of view,”¹⁸ To speak about environmental justice from ecofeminist point of view we can refer to the stands of ecofeminist philosophers like Warren, Cheney and Plumwood who can inform social ecologists on how dominations work and how they can be ended. Warren openly admits that ecofeminism is a “social ecology”. Warren clarifies her phrase of “Social ecology” – “Ecofeminism recognizes the twin dominations of women and nature as social problems rooted both in very concrete, historical, socio economic circumstances and in oppressive patriarchal conceptual framework which maintain and sanction these circumstances.”¹⁹

Social Justice: A Parameter of Ecofeminism:

The term ‘social justice’ belongs to the domain of ethics. Usually, ethics deals with the question: How should we live? This again can be specified in individual and collective styles of living. When ethics deals with the question: how should we live individually, it refers to morality; but when it deals with the question: how we live collectively, it refers to social justice. But the question: What is justice? It is to be understood as: How should we live together? One can say that the question: How should we live together or what is justice actually underlies the question: How should we live individually? In moral philosophy when a question or a command is associated with the word ‘ought’ or ‘should’ it deserves universalisability. Moral philosophy deals with the responsibilities that each of us has towards others. So a partial answer to the question of justice is that we ought to respect the rights and responsibilities that

¹⁸ Warren, K. *Introduction to Hypatia*, New York (Spring 1991), P-6.

¹⁹ Warren, K. *The power and promise of ecological feminism*, Routledge, New York, 1994, P-143.

each of us individually possess. Justice, therefore, is concerned with giving each person his or her due. In this regard, theories of justice differ in determining exactly what people deserve. This reminds us the famous apprehension of Aristotle regarding justice. Aristotle claims that justice requires treating to the equals equally. That means people be treated equally unless they have differences. This principle is called the formal principle of justice. This formal principle of justice as proposed by Aristotle differs from the utilization approach of justice in which the interest of each person should be treated as of equal value. Accordingly, utilitarian justice argues that environmental resources should be distributed in ways that maximize the greatest happiness of the greatest numbers: perhaps including the interest of future generation and animals.

However, the utilitarian form of justice has been severely criticized by the Kantian form of ethics by saying that the utilitarian form of justice at times fail to treat individuals with the respect due to each person. Here individuals may be treated as a mere means to the end of producing beneficial outcomes. Thus it has been claimed that the utilitarian form of justice is not tenable at all. Rawls addresses an influential account of justice which fulfils the tradition of both Locke and Kant. His theory consists of two major components, viz, a method for dealing on the principle of justice and the specific principle derived from the method. This method itself is a version of the hypothetical social contract used earlier by Locke and Kant. Here each individual is treated as an end and not as a means and each individual unanimously agrees on the principles of justice. In this regard Rawl's concept of justice deserves impartiality what he calls *original position of justice*.

Rawls develops two fundamental principles of justice from the position of which one states that each individual enjoys equal right to the most extensive

system of liberties. For him individuals would demand as much freedom as possible, but no rational and self-interested individuals would be *willing to scarify their own equality simply to secure more liberty for others*. The second principle holds that social and economic benefits and burdens should be distributed equally unless an unequal distribution would benefit the least advantaged members of society. Rawls himself believes that people would accept these principles because rational people always would follow *a maxim in strategy*. But the important point is: how are the benefits and burdens of society distributed? Who will get the benefit and who will bear the burdens? Are the distributions of benefit and burdens fair? What kinds of people are being reinforced by society? One can, of course, answer these questions in terms of *general humanity*. One can say that it is the humans who suffer from environmental destruction and also get benefits from wilderness preservation. But the ecologists as well as ecofeminists have vehemently rejected such type of answer. For them this type of answer actually misses an important distinction between people. But in the subsequent sequel we have to sort out more precisely who will actually benefit and who will pay the price for environmental problems and solutions.

We think that environment justice is the only criterion through which one can investigate the social distribution of environmental benefits and burdens. The opposite stand of justice is unjustifiability (unjust) that means a society that distributes the benefits and burdens unequally is *prima facie* unjust: We can say that many current environmental policies distribute benefits and burdens unjustly. For example, environmental racism is a case in point in which society places the burdens upon people in the least advantaged position, the poor and the people of colour. To speak in the language of Vandana Shiva, "development is reduced to a continuation of the process of colonization, it is

an extension of the project of wealth creation in modern western patriarchy's economic vision, which is based on the exploitation of or exclusion of women (of the west and non-west), on the exploitation and degradation of nature. Development could not but entail destruction of women, nature and subjugated cultures, which is why, throughout the third world, women, peasants and tribals struggling for liberation from 'development' just as they earlier struggled for liberation from colonialism."²⁰ Here we can also mention *Cipko* Movement. Here it is claimed that women often bear a greater environmental burden than men. This again induces the point of sexism. Many environmental researchers time and again have pointed out the risks faced by communities of colour. Robert D. Bullard in a forefront of his research has pointed out that most of toxic waste dumps; landfills and polluting industries are being located in communities and neighborhoods with a high density of poor and minorities. In this regard Bullard cites a study of *National Law Journal* which includes, "There is a racial divide in the way that the U.S. government cleans up toxic waste sites and punishes Polluters. White communities see faster action, better result and stiffer penalties than communities where blacks, Hispanics and other communities live. This unequal protection often occurs whether the community is wealthy or poor."²¹ It is evidently proved enough that a person of colour is likely to live in a area where toxic dumps, landfills, incinerators and polluting industries are located. Even polluters probably are inflicted lesser punishment if they were located in a white neighbourhood. This clearly indicates how the bad subsequence of environment is based on racism. We do not, however, need to look for to find other policies that would reinforce environmental injustice and environmental racism. It is pointed out by many that the policy of controlling population is itself self-defeating as it creates

²⁰ Shive, V. *Staying Alive*, Kali for Women, New Delhi, 1989, P-2.

²¹ Bullard, R. *Unequal Protection*, Sierra Club Books, San Francisco, 1994, P-9.

disproportionate burdening among poor and minority communities. Those who advocate the view that population growth is one of the prime causes of environmental destruction, often set aside the cultural and economic factors that encourage the poor, especially poor women to value more children rather than fewer children. It has been historically witnessed that oppressive population control politics are often targeted against minorities and it includes slavery, Nazism and apartheid. The minorities' people have substantive reason to be sceptical regarding the population control implemented by wealthy white environmentalists. Even ecologist Hardin argues that overpopulation is a serious threat to the survival of all humans. Mentioning the metaphor of lifeboat, Hardin goes on to say that overpopulation is threatening to sink all of us as population surpasses the carrying capacity of the earth. Hardin even was against any food relief to victims of famine and starving people because it would lead, Hardin opines, to a greater population explosion among the poor and consequently place a greater burden upon the earth's productive capacity. Hardin seems to have conceived that people in developed countries can maintain their comfortable standard of living while the least advantaged human beings are allowed to starve. It is not that we are in a lifeboat that they are not. There is less room in the lifeboat because we have brought with us all the creature comforts of our consumerist society. Thus, it would be difficult to find a theory of justice willing to claim that such politics give people what they deserve. Moreover, many preservationist politics also appear to benefit social ethics while harming the most vulnerable. Thus, it is justified by saying that our cultures and politics have wrecked environmental so that we might attain a comfortable and healthy lifestyle. One should not seek a comparable standard living because this would jeopardize the remaining wilderness areas, rain

forests and biological diversity. Unfortunately, we do not value these things more than our economic development. But we ought to do this.

There underlies no question of doubt that women and children are the most sufferers in any environmental degradation. This is another example of injustice. It is held that women and children are the most suffers by any potential harm caused by exposure to pollutants, pesticides and toxins fall disproportionately on women. Here we can refer to Maria Mies. To her, development thus is equivalent to maledevelopment, a development bereft of the feminine, the conservation, the ecological principle. The neglect of nature's work in renewing herself, women's work in producing sustenance in the form of basic vital needs is an essential part of the paradigm of maledevelopment. Mal-development is male-development in thought and action. In practice, this fragmental, reductionist, dualist perspective violates the integrity and harmony of man in nature, and the harmony between men and women. It ruptures the cooperative unity of masculine and feminine, and places men, shorn of feminine principle, above nature and women, and separated from both. But women's contribution in the developing world in general and environmental arena in particular is noteworthy. Women are primarily responsible for chores such as cooking and maintaing the home. They also take care of children; they even work outside the home, typically responsible for tending domestic crops and livestock. Moreover, women have greater responsibility for the non mechanized harvesting of crops and thus face risks associated with exposure to pesticides. Even women have less mobility than men to escape pollution and unsanitary conditions. Women also take responsibility for gathering fuel wood and water without hampering environmental balance. Thus, any industrial advancement which tends to extinct forest lands and also polluting water, leads to the exploitation and subjugation of women. In actual fact, there is less water,

less fertile soil, less genetic wealth as a result of the development process. Since these natural resources are the basis of nature's economy and women's survival economy, their scarcity is impoverishing women and marginalize people in an unprecedented manner. Their impoverishment lies in the fact that resources which supported their survival were absorbed into the market economy while they themselves were excluded and displaced by it. It has been statistically estimated almost 34.6 percent of all childhood dwelt in underdeveloped countries result from the lack of access to clean water. We find sufficient evidences in Chipko Movement, which underlies the view in what senses environmental degradation and development in many underdeveloped countries create particular burdens for women. Women and children have also been affected by the harms of overpopulation in many forms.

Social Ecology: A Bookchinian Approach

Murray Bookchin, a leading proponent of social theorist, has tried to establish the connection between social domination and the domination of nature. This theory, at times, is called eco-anarchism or most commonly known as *social ecology*. Bookchin's concept of philosophical tradition such as Marxian socialism, libertarian anarchism and the western organic tradition is associated with the greatest philosophers like Aristotle and Hegel. The objective of social ecology is to underline the concept of social domination of women by men and then to establish in what sense it is connected to ecological problems. According to Bookchin, this can be apprehended in terms of hierarchies. He says, ".....the cultural, traditional and psychological systems of obedience and command, not merely the economic and political systems to which the terms class and state most appropriately refer. Accordingly, hierarchy and domination could easily continue to exist in a *classless or stateless society*. I refer to the domination of the young by the old, of women by men, of one

group by another, of masses by bureaucrats who profess to speak of 'higher social interest', of countryside by town and in a more subtle psychological sense of body by mind, of spirit by a shallow instrumental rationality."²²

The above passage of Bookchin gives a plenty of clues in what context he apprehends the so-called notion of social domination and its *parity* with natural domination in terms of hierarchies. The concept of hierarchy logically leads to at least the existence of two groups of which one is superior or holds more power than the other. The superior group always deserves obedience from the inferior group. That is why the concept of hierarchy always promotes social systems of domination in which the superior group is adept to weild the inferior group to serve the purpose of the superiors. This is exactly the same thing running in the whole biotic community. Superior-inferior context in terms of hierarchy understood by Bookchin is not at a par with the slogan of Darwin's: *Survival of the fittest*. Rather these hierarchies as systems are the outcome of conflict in which the balance of the biotic community, which is needed for all species, can be misbalanced.

We think that Bookchin's concept of social ecology is different from that of Marxists and anarchists. Like Marxists, he does not agree on the view that the underlined form of social hierarchy and domination rests with economic classes. Equally he does not share the same observation with the traditional anarchists who maintain that the modern nation state is the primary agent of social domination. Unlike Marxists and traditional anarchists, Bookchin explores structures of domination within societies in which there is no relevance of economic class as propounded by Marxists as well as no bureaucratic nation state as advocated by traditional anarchists. Like many other traditional systems, Bookchin does not propose physical domination and

²² Bookchin, M. *Ecology of Freedom*, Black Rose Books, Montreal, 1991, P-4.

power as the means of social control. For him hierarchy is also a state of consciousness as well as social condition. He, therefore, goes on to say that it can happen that people can be oppressed by their consciousness, their understanding and behalf like external forces. Thus, Bookchin speaks of people who *internalize* social structures of hierarchy and thereby learn to accept a life of “to it and sacrifice” while their superiors enjoy a life of pleasure and satisfaction. In his classic book ‘*The Ecology of Freedom*, Bookchin seems to conceive a history of the diverse forms of hierarchy and domination underlying in societies from the paleolithic era to the modern world. He holds that the domination of nature actually stems from these patterns of social hierarchy and domination. Here Bookchin calls upon Marxists interpretation in which the human ability to dominate nature allows the creation of wealth and class structure. Subsequently, it leads to class conflict and oppression. According to Bookchin, social structures of domination through hierarchy process always preceded the domination of nature.

According to Bookchin, humans can be shaped and created by their social history. This can occur in two ways. In one sense human can go through life being created by and in turn creating their social world without fully recognizing their reality or they can be fully conscious of and responsible for this history. Thus the preminent value is fully conscious *self-determining activity*, because only through this type of action that human must fully attain their natural potential as conscious thinking being. Bookchin’s anarchist conception of freedom is the outcome of such value. But how is fully conscious self-determining activity possible? It is possible only when humans are completely free from all forms of external controls and dominations. It includes not only physical but social, psychological, intellectual and emotional forms of coercion. A just society is therefore one in which humans are free from all

forms of control and domination. This is the objective of Bookchin's *libertarian anarchism*.

A just community, opines Bookchin, is one in which there are common needs and goals for everyone. It is a kind of community that eschews domination and exploitation in any form whether domination of humans or of nature. A just community is guided by democratic values such as full participation and freedom. These are called the norms of such community. It avoids institutions and customs which tend to place one person or a group of people in position of authority over others. In a just community, decision making authority is decentralized in which individuals complement and cooperate with each other but do not dominate each other. Indeed, the ideal *anarchistic community would approximate an ecosystem*. It would be diversified, balanced and harmonious.

A just community or society always desires sustainable agriculture instead of scientifically based agriculture simply because sustainable agriculture is just like a life style in which both humans and their natural surrounding can live free from dependence upon dominating institutions and practices. For Bookchin, sustainable agriculture decentralizes and diversifies decision making authority. In this regard, it is truly a democratic practice. Moreover, sustainable agriculture reinforces a life style in which local communities become sustainable and self-sufficient. In a just community people experience true freedom and also be able to live in harmony with their natural environment. Bookchin, however, claims that this is not accidental. For him nature's freedom from human domination can come about only in a world in which human are also free from domination.

To highlight Bookchin, mutualism, self organization, freedom and subjectivity, Cohered by social ecology's principles of unity in diversity, spontaneity and non hierarchical relationships, are constitutive of evolution's potentialities.

Aside from the ecological responsibilities they confer on our species as the self-reflexive voice of nature, they literally define us. Nature does not “exist” for us to use, but it makes possible our uniqueness. Like the concept of being, these principles of social ecology require not analysis, but merely verification. They are the elements of an ethical ontology, not rules of a game that can be changed to suit personal needs and interests.

Critical observation of Bookchin’s social Ecology:

Although Bookchin’s concept of social ecology is praiseworthy in many contexts, yet it is not free from criticisms. At first it is criticised by saying that the connection Bookchin outlines between social domination and the domination of nature is not clear. Unlike Marxist theory, Bookchin explicitly denies a necessary connection between social hierarchies and social domination on the one hand, and attempts to dominate nature on the other. He rules out any causal connection in between them. But what he makes that the relationship between them is not at all clear from his observation. Thus, one may criticise Bookchin by saying that so long we get a clear answer regarding the relationship raised above; social ecology loses much of its persuasive ground, particularly when we focus on its practical implications. Those who advocate a strong causal connection between social domination and the domination of nature would claim that it would not be possible to cope with environmental challenges unless we first admit social hierarchies. Bookchin has claimed that social hierarchies are inevitable in the societies. In the strong causal interpretation, what is claimed is clear enough. It addresses social questions before ecological ones. If we address ecological question first independently of addressing social hierarchies, the very relevance of social ecology as propounded by Bookchin begs question.

We think that Bookchin's theory deserves much more fairness than the challenges rose against it. Although he rules out a necessity of causal connection between social domination and domination of nature, but this does not make sense to say that the connection under consideration is merely accidental. Instead of causal connection Bookchin addresses historical connection between social domination (hierarchies) and the idea of dominating nature. Historically, hierarchical societies always encore humans to identify social progress with control of and domination over non-human nature. Eventually the connections can be thought mutually reinforcing. Logically, in addressing one require addressing the other. Any change in natural world would provoke prior change in social arrangements. Changing our social relationships to less hierarchical will encourage a more felicitous relationship with nature.

Bookchin elsewhere also allows humans in guiding natural evolution. He even casts humans as stewards of evolution simply because human beings are capable of consciously serving and directing natural evolution. By considering humans as *stewards of evolution*, Boonchin, critics say, favours human interest more over non-human interests. Moreover, it allows humans to *seize the helm of evolution* and thereby direct nature to human ends. We think that by declaring humans as *stewards of evolution* Bookchin admits anthropocentrism which is not conducive for habitable biotic community. Critice, however, rejects such anthropocentrism as it would lead to too much ecological destruction. According to Bookchin, human society is the outcome of natural evolution what he technically calls *a nature rendered self consciousness*. On the line of this thesis, Bookchin rejects the view that calls for humans to remove themselves from the natural world or that degrades the uniqueness of human beings. Here we can mention the names of biocentric ethics and Deep

Ecology in which the uniqueness of human beings or the rational abilities of human beings has been overlooked. Contrary to these theories, Bookchin apprehends social ecology as humanistic which requires a shift in vision from the skies to the earth: from superstition to reason; from deities to people. Bookchin thus proposes a *second nature*, which includes such feature of human evolution as rationality, culture and society from first nature which refers to the non-human world. The distinction between *first nature and second nature* is justified in terms of degree, but not in terms of kind. It means that human are not simply the biotic citizens as described in biocentric ethics, land ethics and Deep Ecology.

Bookchin gives much importance on natural evolution and thereby claims that natural evolution has provided humans the necessity to interfere with *first nature* to consciously change *first nature* by means of institutionalized form of community what he calls society. To speak in the language of Bookchin, "dialectical naturalism is organic enough to give a more liberatory meaning to vague words *interconnectedness and holism* without sacrificing intellectuality. It can answer the questions posed at the beginning of the essay: What nature is humanity's place in nature, the thrust of natural evolution and society's relationship with the natural world."²³ For him, human traits have not only emerged from natural evolution, they can also be placed at the service of natural evolution to consciously increase biotic diversity, diminish suffering, foster the evolution of new ecologically valuable life forms. But this does not make sense to say that by admitting purposive human intervention Bookchin actually invites anthropocentrism. What he inclines to say is that the so-called *second nature* is completely shaped by social hierarchies and ideas of domination. Natural world, Bookchin opines, perhaps cannot control this type

²³ Bookchin, M. *The Philosophy of Social Ecology, (Dialectical Naturalism)* Rawat Publications, Jaipur, 1996, P-6.

of thinking and reasoning as acquired by the *second nature*. Unlike many others, Bookchin, therefore, proposes a conservative and prudent approach to any activity that changes nature. This is justified by saying that humanity, as a part of natural evolution; relational thought has a responsibility to act as steward of the natural process.

The above standpoint of Bookchin often leads to a conflict between himself and deep ecologists. Deep ecologists often accuse Bookchin of introducing anthropocentrism and attribute to him the view that human beings are higher form of life. Bookchin, on the contrary, criticises deep ecologists for introducing an oppressive and misanthropic philosophy. We have observed in the previous sequels that Deep Ecology addresses a biocentric or ecocentric form of ethics in which 'equal moral worth' has been given to human as well as non-human life forms. But Bookchin vehemently criticizes the extreme standpoint of deep ecologists. Deep ecologist at times claims that famine and AIDS were nature's revenge for overpopulation and ecological destruction. This seems that starving children in places like Ethiopia and Somalia should be allowed to die of some natural ecological law. Bookchin clearly rejects such views as unjust. For him these views clearly originate from the philosophy of biocentrism. He says, "If the Deep Ecology principles of biocentrism preach that human beings are no different from lemmings in terms of their *intrinsic worth* and the moral consideration we owe them, and if human beings are viewed as being subject to *natural laws* in just the same way as any other species then these "extreme statements are really the logical conclusion of Deep Ecology Philosophy....."²⁴

Thus there we find an apparent tussle between deep ecologists and social ecology as propounded by Bookchin. Deep Ecology pleas for a biocentric

²⁴ Chase, S (ed). *Defending theEarth*, South End Press, Boston MA, 1991,P-125.

equality in which all humans are equally responsible for ecological destruction or degradation. It accuses anthropocentrism for any ecological crisis. Anthropocentrism is a product of man centred ethics in which the domination of man over other species is equally justified. Biocentrism is a counterpart of anthropocentrism in which a life centered ethics is developed. Bookchin, however, does not agree with the rigoristic approach of biocentric ethics in which humanity is criticized for destroying the natural world.

So far we have outlined and examined the objective of social ecology as propounded by Bookchin and then we have shown the subtle distinction and conflict between Social ecology and Deep Ecology. We think that Deep Ecology and biocentrism is the counter view of anthropocentrism. Bookchin takes a middle stand of biocentrism and anthropocentrism. Bookchin is neither a proponent of anthropocentrism as it appears to be nor a biocentric ecologist. Rather he honours human rationality and humanity, which for him, cannot be subdued by natural world. This standpoint sidelines him from biocentrism where human beings are to be morally equal with all other species. For Bookchin, owing to the apprehended roots of our ecological crisis, we need to look how societies are organized. Society is a human creation and some forms of society can lead to an attitude that encourages human to dominate and destroy the natural world. Is it justified? Bookchin says yes. Since, for him, society is a human creation, human being can also change it. Bookchin further reminds us that although human decisions and human values have played a major role in ecological destruction, they can be a major part in ecological solutions as well. Here it could be added that all value, for us, is anthropogenic-generated by human experience (although always co-created with and in world). But because value is generated by human beings, it does not follow that humans must be the main repository or central concern of value.

Ecofeminism: The Connections

We have observed in what sense social ecology has taken an effort to establish a connection between social domination and the domination of nature. Let us now proceed to examine in what sense ecofeminism establishes connection between these two forms of domination. Ecofeminism identifies a variety of approaches through which one can establish or find a connection between social domination and domination of nature. Warren says ecofeminism is the portion which holds important connections such as historical, experiential, symbolic and theoretical between the domination of women and the domination of nature. Like social ecologists ecofeminist philosophers have very similar concerns. They make issues of race, sex and class central to any environmental stance and thus make possible a multitargeted criticism of the economically privileged environmentalism prevalent in the society. The political action shows that women empowered by knowledge of ecological relationships can use that knowledge to end specific forms of oppression involving membership in many oppressed groups, specifically those involving people of colour, women, non-urban peoples, nature and lower economic classes. Since ecofeminism is a very recent topic, plenty of literature is yet to be developed. However, it occupies an important position in environmental ethics. Of course, the theory of ecofeminism is rooted in feminist ethics which explores a wide variety of viewpoints concerning the nature and analysis of women's oppression. Feminists also explore diverse views concerning the connection between the domination of women and the domination of nature. Here we shall review some of the connections that have been made between the domination of women and the domination of nature and thereby provide an overview of their philosophical and environmental significance.

Here we find an argument in Warren's observation in which the logic of domination has been justified. The logic of domination is confined to two groups, viz. men and women and is based on the basis of a few characteristics, namely, men are rational and women are emotional. There we find a value hierarchism which attributes to these characteristics, for example, reason is superior to emotion and the subordination of one group is justified by its lack of this superior characteristic, for example, men is superior because they are more rational than women. Feminist thinkers vehemently oppose the above logic of domination. There we have different forms of feminism, namely, liberal, Marxist, radical and socialist forms of feminism each of which offers an account of the oppression of women and an alternative social philosophy. Liberal feminists deny relevant difference between men and women. Liberals, like the utilitarians, Kant and Rawls argue that all humans possess the same nature as free and rational beings. Accordingly, any unequal treatment towards women would deny this moral equality and would therefore be unjust. That is why; liberal feminists devote much of their energy to find out any form of discrimination and thereby fighting for equal rights and equal opportunity for women. Marxist feminists are of the opinions that women are oppressed simply because they are primarily confined to domestic and dependent forms of labour which are ignored by men. Since women are being engaged in full-time domestic labour and thereby allowing men to take part to accumulate land, women are not allowed to give property right of ownership over the home. Men thus exploit women which is unjust. Marxists feminists therefore suggest a full participant, independent and productive forms of labour for women which will free women from economic and political exploitations. Social feminists reject the class concept as offered by the Marxists. For them the oppression of women lies submerged in a complex web of social relationship which include both

economic and the traditional patterns of gender role. Socialists feminists therefore call upon *Chipko Movement* through which women become liberated from economic and social oppression by holding a more autonomous and responsible role in their own lives. To refer to Chipko Movement, “indigenous forest management, as largely a women’s domain for producing sustenance, was thus in an involved state when the British arrived. Since the British interest in forest was exclusively for commercial timber, indigenous expertise became redundant for their interest and was replaced by a one-dimensional masculinity science of forestry”²⁵ Radical feminists hold that biological and sexual discrepancies between men and women are not the root cause of women oppression. This form of feminism is called radical in the sense that it denies the views that women’s oppression can be reduced to some other basic form of oppression. It holds that women are culturally defined in terms of biology which is based on a wide ranging gender system that ensures that women remain dominated by men for their inherent status of mother, wife and sex object . Because of their roles in childbearing, child raising and human sexuality, women have been characterized as more controlled by their bodies, more passive and more emotional than men. Therefore, men ought to be possessed of superiority over women. Radical feminists, however, claim that the oppression of women by men can be abolished if the gender roles are totally prohibited. Some early radical feminists, however, maintain that women should strive for a *unisex or androgynous* culture whereas others advocated a complete separation between men and women. Interestingly, there we have seen other radical feminists who have accepted domination. Rather than denying biological, sexual and gender differences between men and women these feminists encourage and celebrate the female. Importantly, a significant

²⁵Shiva, V. *Staying Alive, Kali for Womens*, New Delhi, 1989, P-61.

amount of work on ecological issues has come from this branch of radical feminism. Cultural ecofeminism ever holds that there exists authentic and particular woman ways of expressing, understanding and valuing the world. It holds that women's perspectives historically and closely have been identified with nature and that women like nature have been systematically oppressed in this process. Instead of denying the link between women and nature cultural ecofeminists aim "to remedy ecological and other problems through the creation of alternative *women's culture* based on revaluing, celebrating and defending what patriarchy has devalued, including the famine, non-human nature, the body and the emotion."²⁶

The connection between women's culture and ecological concerns have been explored in a number of ways. However, here we shall briefly focus on two, namely, an ecological ethics based on care and relationships and a women's spirituality movement. We have already claimed that gender discrepancy is one important form of oppression. The contrast between masculine and feminine has been a part of the oppression of women as it views men as rational and objective and women as emotional and overtly concerned with personal. The domestic roles of women as mother and wives mean that those values are important to women, e. g. caring, relationship, love; responsibility which remain outside of mainstream ethical theorizing. Mainstream ethics is based on abstract, rational and universal principle. The traditional theories of natural law, utilitarianism and deontology are prime examples of ethics perceived this way. Many feminists, however, conceive that many of the values are traditionally associated with women's roles-what they call *ethics of care*. Ethics of care de-emphasizes the so called abstract rules and principles and thereby places for a conceptualized ethics based on care and relationship.

²⁶ Plumwood, V. *Current Trends in Ecofeminism*, Humanities Press, Atlantic Highlands, 1994,P-10.

Traditional ethics which deals with moral laws, rights duties, obligation and justice postulates a world in which interest conflict, in which the demands of justice restrict and limit human freedom, in which morality battles egoism. Care ethics, on the contrary, deals with moral universe in which co-operation replaces conflict, relationship replaces confrontation and caring for others replaces rights and duties. To highlight care ethics Maria Mies could be referred to. To speak for Mies:

- (a) "Their interaction with nature, with their own nature as well as the external environment, is a reciprocal process. They conceive their own bodies as being productive in the same way as they conceive of external nature being so.
- (b) Although they appropriate nature, their appropriation does not constitute a relationship of dominance or a property relation. Women are not owners of their own bodies or of the earth, but they co-operate with their bodies and with the earth in order to let grow and to make grow.
- (c) As producers of new life they also become the first subsistence producer and inventors of the first productive economy, implying from the beginning social production and the creation of social relations, i.e. of society and history."²⁷

Thus, ethics of care introduces a new ideal into moral philosophy in which mothering and relationship serve as a moral ideal instead of abstract principles like individual autonomy and freedom from interference and domination.

Now, the question is why ethics of care is being introduced only in a women's perspective? According to many feminists, an ethics of care is more compatible with the life experience of women, particularly as those experience that follow

²⁷ Maria, M. *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale* London, Zed Books, 1984, P-16, 17, 55.

from both reproductive biology and experiences in mothering; life of child bearing and child rearing are completely absent in abstract ethical principles. Therefore, the vocabulary of rights and duties, autonomy and justice, rules and law is highly artificial and inappropriate within the context of mother child relationship. As rights and duties, at least in Kantian intention, limited to human beings as supposedly the only rational animals, and are purely individual, do not appeal to the ethics of ecology. Cultural ecofeminists, the believers of an ethics of care, acknowledges that women are historically closer to nature than men; thus unlike men there always underlie a benevolent relationship between women and nature. In this regard, ethics of care covers human nature relationship just as it covers mother-child relationships. Accordingly, women who are thought to experience this caring more directly and more immediately than men are the more appropriate voice for nature's interests. In this regard, feminism comes nearer to ecology.

We have already seen that an ethics of care goes beyond an ethics relating to abstract principles. Here we can reflect the ethics of care with reference to some issues of virtues. In ethics, a moral person is conceived as free and independent. That is why every moral agent should be responsible to the question: What should I do? Care ethics, as we have noted, focus on specific relationships in detail and thereby unearth the full nature of these relationships and affiliation. Virtue ethics, stemming largely from Plato's Philosophy and developed by Aristotle focuses centrally on developing a virtuous character, 'conversely the exercise of virtue is what produces a good person. Thus, ethics of care has a close proximity with virtue ethics and therefore an ethics of care replaces abstract and general principles. Thus an ethics of care always seeks the good person, what is called the *loving mother*. Accordingly, moral actions would be those performed by good persons having the affiliation of loving and

caring attitude and outlooks. The most pertinent question is: how does an ethics of care is attached with environmental issues? If an ethics of care replaces the so called traditionally abstract principles, then surely our next generation will completely miss the so-called traditional ethics. This may be true, but this is not at all important in the present context. What is important is that ethics should be estimated situationally. Moral actions should be judged and measured in context to the prevailing situation. Abstract form of ethics mostly ignores situations. Sylvan and Bennett opine that environmentally at least, all established ethics are inadequate. Of course, there have been attempts to move established ethics in an ecological direction. The objective of environmental ethics is to block environmental degradation in any form. Ecofeminism is an integral issue of environmental ethics in which the domination and exploitation of both nature and women can be vehemently protested and thereby proposes a kind of ethics which is linked with care and love. So the prime task is to justify in what context an ethics of care is related to environmental issues. We have already shown that an ethics of care can shift our focus always from abstract principles and questions. Accordingly, an ethics of care does not get bogged down with abstract questions concerning the moral standing of animals characterise so much of the animal liberation discussion. Rather an ethics of care deals with the question: Do we care about animals? Do we have relationships with them? An ethics of care is mostly concerned with the question: how can we and do exist in relationship with our natural surroundings? This is exactly what we come to know from Leopold's injunction that we must first come to 'love, respect and admire the land' before applying the more abstract principles of land ethics. Chipko movement is another glaring example of care ethics in which women are literally found embracing trees to protect them from violence. To quote Vanda Shiva,

“women’s work that protects and conserves nature’s life in forestry and in agriculture, and through such conservation work sustains human life through ensuring the provision of food and water, for them forestry is married to food production, for then, however forests are food, not in death, but in life and woman’s work in forest facilitates the process.”²⁸ Thus there are plenty of clues through which it can be adequately justified in what senses an ethics of care is linked to environmental issues.

Besides care ethics, woman’s spirituality movement is another important area in which cultural ecofeminists have explored a bond between woman and nature. In western mainstream religion, God is seen as outside nature. Nature is a mere matter. It is passive, inert, shapeless and dead. It is God who has created, formed and breathed life into dust. Accordingly, women are associated with and are at par with nature because like nature they are passive, dependent on their bodies. Thus, mainstream religion often sees woman as lacking the spirituality that would qualify them as priests, ministers, popes and so on. Thus in the mainstream religion we again can witness a dual association between woman and nature. Cultural ecofeminists just try to reverse the mainstream religious trend by bringing the concept of women’s spirituality. Here honour and dignity has been given to the identification of the tri concepts of women, nature and devines. Often looking to ancient religions in which God was identified both as the earth itself and as women, some cultural ecofeminists honour a spirituality that views the goddess as immanent in nature and also views the natural world as revealing the devine. To substantiate this, we can quote Carol Lee Flinders as this celebrity describes the women of Garwhal region of the Himalayas.... “they enjoy a connection with trees, rivers , mountains, livestock and plants that is simultaneously their connection with

²⁸ Shiva, V. *Staying Alive, Kali for Womens*, New Delhi, 1989, P-24.

divinity, and the connection is seen absolutely reciprocal”²⁹ Accordingly, the earth itself is worshipped as divine and caring for or loving the earth is a spiritual as well as ecological responsibility. Celebrating Mother nature (the Greek Goddess Gaia), joining the sistershood and to dress like a woman for the rest of a man’s life as depicted in Indian mythology, the groves of mother goddess of the Attonga tribe in West Africa become the way, of women’s spirituality to rejoice in the sacredness of women and nature.

Some Recent Developments of Ecofeminists

Most recently there we find some new clues in ecofeminism (detailed literature in this regard is yet to be available), which somehow or other modifies or goes against the views of existing ecofeminism. It is claimed that any attempt to distinct or to separate women from men by introducing care ethics or women’s spirituality ultimately leads to dualism, because it establishes the view that women are very much closer to nature than man. Recent neo-ecofeminists cast doubt by saying that these feminists by inviting dualism only reinforce the way of thinking that underlies hierarchies and logic of domination. New ecofeminists like Plumwood calls this ‘the feminism of uncritical reversal’ and sees it as “perpetuating women’s oppression in a new and subtle form.”³⁰

Like Plumwood Yuestra King echoes the same point by saying that an unwitting complicity’ in a patriarchal mind set underlies the culture-nature split that this view assumes. Current ecofeminism thus develops and proposes a new trend which is called *Transformative feminism*.

Transformative feminism:

Instead of cultural ecofeminism which is rooted in radical feminism, Plumwood and Warren plea for a *third wave of feminism* what they call an

²⁹ Carol, L. F. *At the Root of this Longing : Reconciling a Spiritual Hunger and a Feminist Thirst*, Harper San Francisco, 1998, P-260.

³⁰ Plumwood, V. *Feminism and Ecofeminism*, Humanities Press, Atlantic Highlands, 1994,P-12.

integrative and transformative feminism. Transformative feminism is completely different from the other four forms of feminism as discussed above. Unlike the other forms of feminism, transformative feminism makes a responsible ecological perspective centered to feminist theory and practice. Since transformative feminism is the third wave as expounded by Plumwood, we have to explain the other two waves before explaining the third wave feminism after Plumwood. The first wave feminism is rooted in liberal feminism which seeks to end any form of discrimination and thereby tries to attain equality for women. But the problem of this wave of feminism is that in a culture in which masculine traits and characteristics dominate, equality of women amounts to little more than requiring women to adopt these dominant traits. This makes sense to say that women can be equal to men only if they become masculine. But when strong cultural forces work against them, it would literally be impossible to become women equal to men. Thus, the ecological implication of the first wave is devastating. Here it would be worthwhile to quote E. Vellacott:

“I am a member of an oppressed minority; I have no way making you listen to me; I turn to terrorism I am a doctor, yet I cannot force you to think as I want you to. I fling you in jail, starve your children, and torture you. I am a woman in a conventional authoritarian marriage situation; I feel helpless and inferior and powerless against my husband’s constant undermining; so I undermine him, make him look foolish in the eyes of his children. Violence is resourcelessness.”³¹ Here women can liberate themselves from an oppressive identification with nature only if they like men become oppressors of nature. But this is not all possible simply because women’s genesis is very much equal to nature on many amounts.

³¹ Yuestra, K. *Feminism and Revolt against Nature: Feminism and Ecology*, Vol- 4, 1981, P-15.

The ~~second~~ wave of feminism is presented as the *uncritical reversal* of some feminists which tend to promote and celebrate a distinctive female point of view. However, this perspective risks is being co opted by the dominant male culture by accepting the dualisms that male culture has used via the logic of domination to justify women's oppression. The third wave, therefore, pleas for an alternative to both liberal and radical versions of feminism. This alternative sees the domination of nature and domination of women as inextricably connected. Here women have been identified as closer to nature and nature has been identified as feminine. Here we can call upon Susan Griffin: "The way we stand, you can see we have grown up this way together, out of the same soil, with the same rain, leaning in the same way towards the sun.....And we are various and amazing in our variety, and our difference multiply, so that edge after edge of the endlessness of possibility is exposed. You know we have grown this way for years, and to no purpose you can understand. Yet what you fail to know we know, and the knowing is in us, how we have grown this way, why these years were not one of them heedless, why we are shaped the way we are, not all straight to your purpose, but to ours. And how we are each purpose, how each cell, how light and soil are in us, here we are in the soil, how we are in the air, how we are infinitesimal and great and how are infinitely without any purpose you can see, in the way we stand, each moment heeded in this cycle, no detail unlovely."³²

Thus, the theory of ecofeminism through these identifications has reinforced the oppression of each. Thus, environmental philosophy and feminism need to develop in unison, each recognizing parallel interests.

Plumwood and Warren are of the opinion that at a preliminary level both feminism and ecological movement need to address a cluster of dualisms and

³² Griffin, S. *Women and Nature*, The Women's Press, London, 1984, P-65.

dualistic ways of thinking under the logic of domination. But we have seen that the distinctions that are based on the principle of the logic of domination are not tenable. The third wave of ecofeminism challenges both feminists and environmentalists alike to uncover the patterns of domination common to the oppression of women and nature and thereby proposes an alternative and non-dualistic ways of thinking about both human and non-human nature. To quote Plumwood, “..... concepts of the self that separate human beings from the rest of nature inherit ‘the discontinuity problem,’ because they fail to see human beings as part of (continuous with) nature, and reinforce the false human/nature dichotomy so prevalent in western world views.”³³

The dualistic approach of ecofeminism always involves the split between masculine and feminine, human and nature and reason and emotion, mind the body, objectivity and subjectivity. In our culture there we find the support of domination in any form of dualism. In this regard it can be said that masculine dominates over feminine, human over nature, reason over emotion, mind over body and objectivity over subjectivity. Thus, the prime task of ecofeminism is to weed out any form of dualism if it prevails in our society and thereby develops an alternative pattern of thinking. However, this requires technological and scientific understanding of nature. It is true to say that a good number of feminist thinkers have thought that culture has identified women with nature. Even it has been revealed that such type of identifiability has influenced western science. There is no question of doubt that science has a close proximity with the dominant part of these dualism, viz. masculine, human, rational, mental, objective etc. Here we can call upon Vandana Shiva. “The rise of reductionist science was linked with the commercialization of science, and resulted in the domination of women and non-western peoples.

³³ Plumwood, V. *Feminism and Ecofeminism*, Humanities Press, Atlantic Highlands, 1994,P-59.

Their diverse knowledge systems were not treated as legitimate ways of knowing. With commercialization as the objective, reductionism became the criterion of scientific validity. Nonreductionist and ecological ways of knowing, and nonreductionist and ecological systems of knowledge, were pushed out and marginalized.”³⁴ Even a particular way of understanding nature, women and marriage has also helped shape the early development of western science. Modern reductionist science that turns out to be a patriarchal project has excluded women as experts, and has simultaneously excluded ecological and holistic ways of knowing which understand and respects nature’s process and interconnectedness *as science*. For Bacon, nature was no longer Mother Nature, but a female nature, conquered by a aggressive masculine mind. Bacon conceives nature as a women and nature is to become married to man who (men) will subdue her and turn her into a slave. In this regard, Bacon attempts to associate nature not only with women and marriage but also with a particularly an abusive type of marriage. Here the demothering of nature through modern science and the marriage of knowledge with power is simultaneously a source of subjugating women as well as non-European peoples which are to be noted.

The recovery of the feminine principle is an intellectual and political challenge to male-development as a patriarchal project of domination and destruction, of violence and subjugation, of dispossession and the dispensability of both women and nature. As such feminism celebrates diversity and rejects one *correct* environmental theory which is actually based on the domination and subjugation of one species by other species. Ecological ways of knowing nature are participatory. Nature herself is the experiment and women as sylviculturists, agriculturists and water resource managers, the traditional

³⁴ Shiva, V. *Biopiracy: The Punder of Nature and Knowledge*, Research Foundation for Science, New Delhi, 1997, P-24.

natural scientists. Their knowledge is ecological and plural, reflecting both the diversity of natural ecosystems and the diversity in cultures that nature based living give rise to. It is the energy of all living beings, in all their diversity and together with their diversity of lives wields tremendous energy. Women's work is similarly invisible in providing sustenance and creating wealth for basic needs. Their work in the forest, the field and the river creates sustenance in quiet but essential ways. It is their invisible work that is linked to nature and needs which conserves natures through maintaining ecological cycles, and conserves human life through satisfying the basic needs of food, nutrition and water. Finally, the third wave of ecofeminism is also holistic in nature. It is holistic in the sense that it encourages us to apprehend human beings essentially as a part of their human and natural communities. To refer to Abbey "we need wilderness, because we are wild animals. It is our sensuous connection to our surroundings that has allowed us to learn, and even to speak."³⁵ Again to speak of Paul Shepard's simple truth: "The others have made us human."³⁶ Any attempt to sideway human beings from natural communities actually induces dualism. Thus the objective of this ecofeminism is to rule out the view that humans are abstract individuals something different from natural communities. In describing the women of the Garwhal region of the Himalayas Carol Lee Flinders notes that they "enjoy a connection with trees, rivers mountains livestock, and plants that is simultaneously their connection with divinity, and the connection is seen as absolutely reciprocal."³⁷ Ecofeminism, as such refers to a holistic approach regarding the management of our land and other resources, and this will not be easy unless a determined effort is made. For all they talk about the need of scientific temper, it must be

³⁵ Edward, A. *The Monkey Wrench Gang*. New York, Fawcett, 1974, P-84.

³⁶ Paul, S. *Nature and Madness*, Sierra Club, San Francisco, 1982, P-112.

³⁷ Carol, L. F. *At the Root of this Longing : Reconciling a Spiritual Hunger and a Feminist Thirst*, Harper San Francisco, 1998, P-260.

recognized that the current methodology of scientific analyses carries within itself an extremely unscientific practice, that of reductionism. It is this reductionist approach that has today produced both natural and social scientists who know more and more about less and less, who know how to cure a disease but create another disease in the process. It is to be stated here that before multinational technology began to spread across the world and create a multinational culture, there was enormous cultural diversity and as far as the poor are concerned, there still is today. This cultural diversity was no historical accident. It was, in fact, the direct result of the world's biological diversity – the world's cultural diversity sprang from the world's biological diversity, culture steadily found tuned itself to make sustainable use of nature. But the destruction of the environment clearly poses the biggest threat to marginal cultures and occupations like that of tribals, nomads, fisherfolk and artisans, which have always been heavily dependent on their immediate environment for their survival. But the maximum impact of destruction of biomass source is on women. Women in rural cultures are affected, especially women from poor landless, marginal and small farming families. Seen from the point of view of these women, it can be argued that all development is ignorant of women's needs, and often anti-women, literally designed to increase their work burden. Human beings should not be evaluated or apprehended in terms of their private or personal consciousness, thoughts and individualistic choices; rather human beings are created by and are an integral part of their social and natural environments. Socially, the world of scientific experiments and beliefs has to be extended beyond the so-called experts and specialists into the world of all those who have systematically been excluded from it- women, peasants, tribals. The verification and validation of a scientific system would then be validation in practice, where practice and experimentation is real-life activity in society

and nature.” Thus intellectual recovery of feminine principle will create new conditions for women and non-western cultures to become principal actor in establishing a democracy of all life, as countervailing forces to the intellectual culture of death and dispensability that reductionism creates.

Conclusions

We have outlined this chapter as Ecofeminism and Social Ecology and have examined the objective of social ecology and thereby established in what sense social domination is very much close to natural domination. Then we have outlined the objective of ecofeminism in its various forms and thereby shown in what respects domination of women are at par with the domination of nature. We think like Deep Ecology and Leopold’s ethics both social ecology and ecofeminism adhere to introduce a radical shift regarding the relationship between humans and the rest of the natural world. But social ecology and ecofeminism are more specific than land ethics and Deep Ecology regarding the roots of environmental and ecological devastation. Our perception is that the domination of the natural world is only a part in context to the patterns of domination and control and as such unless and until all patterns of domination are eliminated, we can expect little progress in regard to the domination of nature. That makes sense to say that domination of nature cannot be understood in isolation and it cannot be solved irrespective of ignoring other forms of domination. Rather it is only a pattern of domination which is linked to the general patterns of domination. In this regard, it can be solved in a coherent and integrated way.

Although both social ecology and ecofeminism have contributed a lot in implementing and introducing a radical outlook regarding the relationship between human and the rest of the natural world, they too face serious philosophical challenges. It is not clear from these theories how exactly we are

to understand the connection between human domination of other humans and the human domination of the non-human nature. Is there any causal relation in between them? Are they mutually reinforcing? Should one have ethical priority over the other? Are they simply parallel developments? What are the ethically and philosophically preferable strategies for resisting these forms of domination? What are the connection between the domination of women and other forms of social domination? Is ecofeminism a branch of social ecology? These and many questions can be raised against this thesis to which plausible answers cannot be found straightway. However, barring all these shortcomings social ecology and ecofeminism have a significant contribution to environmental ethics and environmental philosophy. Ecofeminism particularly gives rise to a unified and overreading environmental philosophy. Ecofeminists analyse the twin dominations of women and nature and includes considerations of the domination of people of colour, children and the underclass. We think many of the questions raised against ecofeminism and social ecology are related to abstract principles of ethics and completely irrelevant to both social ecology as well as ecofeminism. We think that by calling attention to these approaches we can surely understand the benefits of the type of alternative social arrangement typified by sustainable agriculture.

According to Bacon science and technology not only exert mere guidance over nature, but also they have the power to conquer and subdue her, to shake her to the foundations. Thus, we can apply scientific theories to explain and predict natural phenomena. The ability to predict natural phenomena is simply the first step in developing technology to control natural phenomena, to conquer and to subdue her and make her our slave. In this regard technology sees values only instrumentally; it sees only means values, if nature is used for human interests. Science and technology undertake nature even non-instrumentally simply

because natural values as the outcomes of emotion and feelings are therefore subjective and having no scientific significances. This makes sense to say that scientific and technological developments have devalued nature both instrumentally as well as non-instrumentally, both intrinsically and non-intrinsically. In other words, technological upliftment, though it has been rationally developed, actually goes against nature. It degrades nature, tends to extend nature, and tries to conquer nature which is morally unjustifiable.

But we think that any attempt to conquer nature is a misadventure towards nature. Technological development in any form can exploit nature; but it is completely wrong to hold that technology enables to conquer nature. Here we can mention the name of Leibnitz who claimed that men can never conquer nature. Any attempt of conquering nature is ultimately proved to be a mistaken attempt. Thus new ecofeminists have proposed to change the prevailing apprehensive patterns of thinking, not by abandoning the so-called main stream science, but by abandoning the attitudes and approaches of science towards nature. To refer to Harding, "Neither God nor tradition is privileged with the same credibility as scientific rationality in modern cultures. The project that science's sacredness makes taboo is the examination of science in just the ways any other institution or set of social practices can be examined. If we are not willing to try and see the favoured intellectual structures and practices of science as cultural artifacts rather than as sacred commandants handed down to humanity at the birth of modern science, then it will be hard to understand how gender symbolism, the gendered social structure of science, and the masculine identities and behaviours of individual scientists have left their marks on the problematics, concepts, theories, methods, interpretations, ethics, meanings and goals of science."³⁸

³⁸ Susan, H. *The Science Question in Feminism*, Ithaca Cornell University Press, 1986, P-30.

One should not or perhaps cannot ignore the positive applications of science in the context of environmental development. Science and technology itself creates pesticides, harnesses regular energy, develops wilderness areas, experiments on animals, conducts agribusiness and also eliminates varmints and predators. Thus one should consider the application of science which can provide sustainable agriculture. But whatever the applications of science and technology might be, it should or ought to be measured in context of human action, ethics and understanding. The objective of third wave of ecofeminism is that it encourages thinking that is contextualistic, pluralistic, inclusive, holistic and down to earth.

It is contextual in the sense that it tends to disregard abstract and universal ethical pronouncements. We have seen that any form of abstract and traditional form of ethical thinking always sidelines the rich diversity with human as well as non-human. Actually, the process of abstracting to the universal has borrowed characteristics from the dominant group and thereby turned them to ethical and philosophical ideals. We have already mentioned how this can reinforce oppression of women, animals and the rest of the natural world. The third wave of ecofeminism is pluralistic and inclusive in the sense that it honours diversity and difference. It has reference to the approach of relational holism and images such as Indra's net are effective in emphasizing our full responsibility to one and to all. It tries to live with the slogan: *Unity within diversity*. Realistically, every biotic community, animate as well as inanimate, is different from each other, but there underlies a unity. The unity is that each of them is an integral part or member of the whole community, contributes something for the betterment of the family, i.e. biotic community. One member cannot survive without the contribution of the other. Metaphorically, it can be

said that the whole biotic community is just like a body and each of the biotic community acts just like the integral part of the body.

The reiterate the commonalities between social ecology and ecofeminism as expressed by Val Plumwood, Jim Cheney and Karen J. Warren, it is to be stated that they can provide a constructive element to Biehl and Bookchin's critical project. The work of these ecofeminists contributes to social ecology's critique of domination and offers a direction in determining what the potentialities of society are and how such potentialities can be met. By empowering the oppressed, ecofeminism also creates a strong base support for social change. Failure to recognize the value of the liberating power of ecofeminist theory can only prove detrimental to the long term social goals espoused by social ecologists like Bookchin and Biehl. Therefore, third wave ecofeminism avoids hierarchies and domination.

