

CHAPTER THREE

ECOFEMINISM AND THE VALUE OF NATURE

We have observed that ecofeminism is an environmental issue in which the domination and exploitation of women on many accounts can be established at par with domination and exploitation of nature. Ecofeminism not only finds out the parity of domination between women and nature, it also explores various ways and means through which such types of domination can be regarded as morally unjust and intolerable. By making comparison between men and nature, it tries to restore the dignity of nature in moral context. In this regard we may say that like feminist ethics, ecofeminism is largely about ethics, norms and values, which will support well-being of the whole biotic community. Thus, any attempt to cohere feminine with nature is to value nature. Ecofeminism, like feminist ethics, seeks to understand better, for example, the scope of moral respect, the sorts of entities that can and should receive moral attention and the nature of good which morality is supposed to promote.

Although it is true to say that a proper biotic community is the outcome of mutual trust and care of all species, yet before the appearance of environmental ethics at the early 70's the relationship between men and nature could not be detected. It is important to note here that environmental ethics is the outcome of technological development. Science and technology gradually degrades nature and the whole biotic community which ultimately invites destruction of nature in general. Here to refer to Vandana Shiva – “the assumption was the western style progress was possible for all, development as the improved well-being of all, was thus equated with the westernisation of economic categories of needs, of productivity, of growth. Concepts and categories about economic

development and natural resource utilisation that had emerged in the specific context of industrialisation and capitalist growth in a center of colonial power, were raised to the level of universal assumptions and applicability in the entirely different contexts of basic needs satisfaction for the people of the newly independent third World Countries.”³⁹ Environmental ethics, therefore, gives moral judgment regarding the technological actions which are directed towards the extinction of natural species. In this process women and nature are the most sufferers on many contexts. Ecofeminism, being a twin concept, looks into the domination of nature as well as the domination of women. Mainstream ethics which is the outcome of technology always attempts to extend a firm moral boundary between human and nature. But this is fallacious and dangerous in the eyes of environmental ethics. Environmental ethics hold that all species are morally equal. Thus, the dualism or moral hierarchies between humans and nature can be shifted with the introduction of environmental ethics.

The value of nature was first witnessed vehemently through the writings of Leopold. Here we can particularly mention his celebrated article Land Ethics which is also supposed to be the landmark of environmental ethics. Leopold himself conceives how conceptions of ethical agents have expanded beyond mere egoism to include societies and social goods. Leopold, the father of contemporary environmental ethics, argues that the current needs and values demand further extension of moral community to include the biotic community the ecosystem and its members. Leopold’s claim not only directs towards the inclusion of ecosystem into the domain of environmental ethics, it also restores equal moral worth to all species. We do not think that all environmental philosophers adopt Leopold’s standpoint. Even Singer and Regan, the two

³⁹ Shiva, V. *Staying Alive*, Kali for Women, 1989, P-1.

leading proponents of environmental philosophy proposed a liberal notion of progress by incorporating all biotic community within the domain of environmental ethics, but they may unlike Leopold admit the view that individual right holders must be human. They did not adhere to the proposal of individualistic annihilation, but rather held that ethical boundaries distinguish humans from other sentient beings. There we have plenty of judicial discourse for considering the interest of non-human organic beings unsettling the comfortable separation between the realm of nature and culture exemplified by legislative institutions. According to some modern laws, the sphere of life should not be generated or necessarily controlled by humans to be a mere resource. Thus, it has been proposed by many environmentalists as well as ecofeminist that the so-called instrumentalists' conception of nature must be rectified.

So feminists as well as ecofeminists point out the unjustifiability of typical human centred judgment and values including most notably those based on Kantian, Utilitarian and egoistic ethics. Human-centred ethics always tries to unsettle our ideas about nature. That is why many environmentalists having the ecofeminist persuasion are of the opinion that at least some benefits of cultures ought to be extended to various non-human animals, because those animals have the same relevant qualities, viz, sentience, consciousness and other psychological capacities that make humans morally valuable. Thus by attributing the value of nature, ecofeminism thereby rejects specicism, the unjustified belief that being human renders one superior to any other form of life. Consequently, they run with the perception that only humans have moral value. But if we recall the view of environmental holism and Deep Ecologists, we will see that they extend beyond sentient or self-conscious beings to include all forms of nature in the universe and thereby tend to point towards more

radical conclusions about conceptions of nature. To refer to Deep Ecologist contention – “vitality of our connection to nature is most obviously singalled by the constant realization of our dependence on it. Air, water and food, the microbes in our gut, the nitrogen fixing bacteria in the soil – without any of these our illusion of autonomy would crumble mighty fast.”⁴⁰ Ecofeminism teaches us the human centred presuppositions which are based on dualism or hierarchies which lead most of us to ignore completely the inherent (intrinsic) value of the non-human natural world. Unfortunately, there we have found some dualistic approach within environmental ethics, e.g., radical ecologists, which also admits a kind of dualism between nature and humans by characterizing humans as monolithic, telos-bound species and nature as the reminder of earthly organic reality. However, barring this group there we find hardly any other approach which runs with the apprehension of value dualism. Paul Taylor in his ethics *Respect for Nature* outlines an important distinction between humans and the rest of the world. Taylor’s discussion of nature hinges on a firm distinction between the universe in which humans see themselves as interacting primarily with other humans, and the sphere in which human think of themselves as interacting with nature (nature includes non-human, individuals, species, bioregions, landmass, the atmosphere, aquatic communities etc.). The above mentioned definition as echoed by Taylor is practically useful in so far as it maps on to choices and actions that appear to be significantly different. According to Taylor, killing a deer for food is different from killing another human being for food because of the differences in the capacities and features of beings and also because of the meanings and histories of the relevant beings, practices and relationing. However, if we forgo the distinction between human ethics and environmental ethics we miss the

⁴⁰ Roger, S.G. *A spirituality of resistance*, Crossroad, New York, 1999, p-20

relevant similarities between them. Consequently we miss the common ethical and metaphysical assumptions that contribute to the kinds of things ethicists think of as problems and solutions.

Ecofeminists, however, outlines the similarities between women and nature in terms of conceptual connections between the devaluations of women and other subjugated groups, interwoven histories of oppression and exploitation, and the relationships among the oppressive systems and institutions and the degradation of nature. Ecofeminism at any point does not consider nature as *something out there*, because it ignores a crucial question at the heart of ecological feminism. Ecofeminism, therefore, offers models for clarifying ethics that assertively protect histories or male centered unjustly biased thought and practice. Ecofeminism is also concerned about history and function of relevant concepts like nature, rationality, personhood and rights as well as their efficacy in framing, evaluating and guiding us through ethical matters.

Although it is true to say that environmental ethics in general and ecofeminism in particular are closed up to or in defiance of anthropocentric values and ontologies, but it has been witnessed from various wings of environmental ethics that the dualistic standpoint concerning nature and humans is different. We think that the dualistic standpoint between humans and nature gets its foothold even if one has to take a radical standpoint of environmental ethics. We have seen while discussing the various forms of feminism, the proposal of social change, but this may never rattle the norms and meanings of gender. Thus, one can say that by extending the scope of ethics, one cannot rule out gender discrimination which is the outcome of biological necessity. However, seminal thinkers in environmental ethics have not argued for the unsettling notion that nature is a constructed concept, not a self-evident or absolute referent. Nature, for them, is no longer a constructed concept. Nature should be

recognized and valued as an end in itself. At the same time one has to acknowledge that any prolonged and critical preoccupation with our values concerning nature and human interaction with non-humans organic reality is likely to lead to some recognition of the strange conceptual genesis, history and the force of nature. But nature gradually loses its original dignity with the advancement of science and technology where nature is recognized as a means to human needs. Ecofeminists have discussed how nature becomes stripped off its mythical relevance in classic and modernist thought and thereby falls victim of enabling its exploitation by men. Men, the possessor of reason, exploit nature as a means to themselves. Consequently, the meaning of nature as well as the staff of nature has undergone innumerable transformations. William Cronon, the eminent historian recently said, "Nature is not merely so natural as it seems. Instead, it is profoundly human construction. This is not to say that the nonhuman world is somehow unreal or a mere figment of our imagination far from it. But the way we describe and understand that world is so entangled with our own values and assumptions that the two can never be fully separated. What we mean when we use the word *nature* says as much about ourselves as about the things we label with world!"⁴¹

One cannot, however, rule out the view that value is much or less human generated and socially dependent even though the construction of value system is hardly intentional. It would appear ridiculous to any ecologist to take some idiosyncratic non-human species behaviour and analyse it without regard to species relationships with other species, which share its home terrains. For example, female lions can determine the size and constitution of their traits or communities and also cast off certain members on the basis of their instincts. Similarly, we human have our own strange and useful practice, e.g. we place

⁴¹ Cronon, William (Ed). *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, W.W. Norton and company, 1995, p-25

value on persons, certain interactions and ways of being in the world through which we can decide our community. Like lioness's actions, human moral agency only makes sense in the rich varieties of our communities, and human community only exists as part of the natural world. But importantly, like human beings, lioness cannot determine, in the case of other species too, our ethics, our dependencies on and relationships with nature, our physical needs and predispositions, shape and limit what ethics can be, or can mean in any given context. Does it mean to say that humans ought to possess moral superiority for having rationality unlike animals? If so, then one can invite and introduce anthropocentrism. But ecofeminism is vocal for restoring the dignity and value of nature not by introducing anthropocentrism but by employing non-anthropocentrism in which any ethical form of dualism among biotic community is being ruled out.

We have noted while discussing the concept of ecology that ethical rules and system within pure egoism have tended to maintain social power and the ability to control others in the hands of the privileged. They try to understand human nature by finding relationships between morals and power. Here we can mention Nietzsche's genealogy of moral characters in which physical strength, cunningness and fearlessness endanger the weak. If normative evaluations are at all useful or if some aspects of ethical lives involve choice regarding behaviour, character or what we value, questions arise about how ethics should be applied. Ecofeminists and environmentalists are in a position to the common failures regarding ethics and therefore reject normative process altogether. However, ecofeminists endorse some practices over others and denote normative evaluations what should be. They have done this with the background that any form of exploitation and expression is morally illegitimate. Such a rejection is based on the belief that the oppressive practices

and ideologies harm something of value. Ecofeminism holds that the starting point of an exploitation of ethical alternative is the assertion of the value of women, not only individually or categorically, but also as persons who do share social, political and historically loaded identities, which are relevant in the context of natural communities and environment. Ecofeminism thus conceives the foundations of ethics as beginning with the assertion of the values of our lives, our communities and nature.

It is clear that ecofeminists interpretation of ethics is mostly centred round female interpretation. Hoagland argues that to debate the value of women's lives is to admit that women's lives are not valuable [Hoagland, 1988]. So one can say that this is perhaps not the best outlook of ecofeminism. Rather the proper criterion to define moral value is to try to evoke a feeling, to draw attention, to narratives, poems, experiences and observations of what we take to be valuable. Here, we can particularly, cite the name of David Hume who believed that reason and morality are *slaves of the passions*. Unlike, ecofeminists, Hume, does not conceive morality as natural (given) or social. He says, "..... nothing can be more unphilosophical than those systems which assert the virtue is the same with what is natural and vice with what is unnatural."⁴² We think that Hume's view is close to ecological feminist ethics which does not take any fixed understandings of nature. However, they do begin with the sense that women, humans, communities and natural objects and systems have non-instrumental value. Since they have non-instrumental value, one ought to avoid of harming them.

The Locus of Moral Value:

In order to determine the value of nature in context to ecofeminism, it is first of all necessary to dig up the locus of moral value. There we have some contrary

⁴² Hume, D. *A Treatise on Human Nature* 1A Selby & P.H. Niddith (ed), Clarendon Press, New York, 1978, p-475.

views regarding this issue of which, of course broadly, one leads to intrinsic value and the other leads to extrinsic value. Those who adhere to the view that moral value must begin with human value would lead to the extrinsic nature of value and those who propose that the locus of moral value actually hinges on restoring and respecting women and nature would lead to intrinsic nature of value. We just extend the arguments in favour of extrinsic values. Here it is said that the locus of value depends on human values as they being the moral agents, make decisions based on, among other things, notions of right and wrong, good and bad. Accordingly, for a thing to have meaning full of moral value, some moral agent must value it as a member of the ethical universe. An object having moral value must be appreciable by moral agents, something necessary for human life, and something which makes human life better. It is something that humans can appreciate and respect even from a distance. Consequently an ethically valuable entity must be capable of having interests or doing well. In this regard, moral value would be utterly inconsequential. Moral objects include whatever is capable, exploited, oppressed, degraded, pained and mistreated by those agents. Nevertheless, moral agents must use some kinds of living beings for food, shelter, technology and science. Being alive is not sufficient to disallow the use and even the death of a thing. Some death and manipulation is necessary for human life and ethics to be at all possible. However, if abuse is understood as mistreatment, or harm without justification, it is necessary to abuse living beings. Unquestionably, the interest and well-being of all these are inevitably connected to the interests and well-being of others. It is difficult to argue that any one entity is valuable in itself. However, since human interests can include the importance of valuing things for reasons not reduced to their instrumentality, we might therefore, assert that it is important for humans to value each other and all biotic communities as

well for their own sake. However, such kind of value too ultimately serves the valuer's interests and has extrinsic origins. In Callicott's words, "..... moral humans create value, but it by no means follows that the locus of all value is consciousness itself or a mode of consciousness like reason, pleasure or knowledge. In other words, something may be valuable only because some values it, but it may also be valued for itself, if not for the sake of any subject experience it may afford the valuer."⁴³

So far we have discussed the locus of moral value in extrinsic sense. It appears that the extrinsic sense of moral value does not rule out the force or relevance of intrinsic sense. The intrinsic sense of value is the value of nature. It is held that although values come from humans, but values need not be human created or based solely on the interests of humans. We can see, appreciate, and care about the interests and well-being of other persons, species, systems and communities. Such type of valuing also gets aesthetic relevance as it is originated from the nature and quality of our biological, cultural and affectionate relationships. It also gets epistemological reasons as we are getting constantly new knowledge from science and other sphere of inquiry. We might notice new sources of respect and value.

Thus, one thing mostly important to note here is that whether the locus of value is men centred or not, one should not or perhaps cannot take a standpoint of anthropocentrism clearly or non-anthropocentrism either. In one context, value is supposed to be human centred as moral value is created by humans. This brings back the relevance of anthropocentrism to some extent. In other sense, since all biotic community depends on each other, we must take care of each species and therefore take moral consideration equally. This brings back non-anthropocentrism. Thus in environmental ethics it is very important to draw a

⁴³ Callicott, J. B. *On the Intrinsic Value of Non-human Species*, B.G. Norton (ed), Princeton University Press, 1986, P-40.

single clear-cut apprehension that moral values are either anthropocentric (extrinsic) or non-anthropocentric (intrinsic). However, within the purview of non-anthropocentrism one cannot ignore the relevance of the point that the ethical perspectives are human in the sense the humans use ethics. Accordingly, it is said that ethics has to be based on human generated valuations and responses. But since human interests are at the center of an ecological feminist ethical scheme, the above point does not turn into anthropocentrism. Arguably, we cannot truly separate human from non-human well-being within the parameter of ecofeminism. This can happen only by changing our perception of human physical, emotional and social well-being. Environmental ethics tries to bring love and care, sympathy and feeling among the whole biotic community what Callicott apprehends or calls *special love* approach. He says, "Our social affections are extended to our fellow members and to the social whole of which we are part. The intrinsic value we attribute to individual human beings and to humanity expresses only our feelings for co-members of our global village and for our human community."⁴⁴

Thus the value of nature in ecofeminist perspectives actually deserves ethical motivation. Here ethical motivation is based on social affections felt and extended towards members of our own species with whom we share feelings, commonality, kinship and understanding. That is to say that emotional, symbolic or cultural connection with others helps us to move beyond simple egoism and generates concern for and motivation towards the interests of others. The objective of ecofeminism as we observe has began with feelings of special attachment to both humans and nature i.e. the whole biotic community. We can also mention Taylor's outlook of biocentrism. Taylor says that nature is something worthy of respect because its individual living members have inherent worth which he calls the biocentric outlook. He inclines to say that

⁴⁴ Callicott, J. B. *On the Intrinsic Value of Non-human Species*, in B.G. Norton (Ed), *Preservation of Species: The Value of Biological Diversity*, Princeton University Press, 1986, P-65.

each thing has a good that is identifiable and distinguishable. Each strives towards good when it has the freedom to and that good ought to be valued and respected for its own sake. Accordingly, following Taylor's biocentrism we can adhere to the convention that any rational moral agent be endowed with the biocentric outlook and the attitude of respect for nature. But the problem of Taylor's notion of biocentrism is that it is based on the realm of the ideal, not an actual moral relationship and situations. Taylor's view of biocentrism, of course, deserves justice, but it overvalues rationality and autonomy with a few rigid rules not readily applicable in ethical life. Taylor, therefore, appears to have conceived moral agents individualistically. Regarding Taylor's work Plumwood says, "The account draws on the familiar view of reason and emotion as sharply separated and opposed, and of desire, caring and love as merely personal and particular as opposed to the universality and impartiality of understanding of famine emotions as essentially unreliable, un-trust worthy and morally irrelevant, an inferior domain to be dominated by a superior, disinterested (and of course masculine) reason."⁴⁵

We think Taylor's approach to environmental ethics is directed upon something rule-following. When Taylor inclines to say that ethics is reducible to justice for individuals, he thereby calls upon a law conception of ethics, which is largely missing in environmental ethics in general. Anscombe often calls this missing a failure of environmental ethics. Although Taylor holds that conceptions of and desire for well-being are aspects of the ultimate attitude of respect for nature, the attitude Taylor opines is authorized in dutiful rule-following. One should not however, misinterpret Taylor with Kant in terms of dutiful rule following in moral judgement. Although Taylor is vocal about an attitude, of course, a moral attitude, which motivates a series of practices, systems of rules and desires, but it does not follow from this that it is motivated by duty as Kant adheres to hold in moral action. We think when Taylor calls

⁴⁵ Plumwood, V. *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*, Routledge, New York, 1993, P-167-68.

for an attitude of respect for nature; he thereby justifies it through the process of rule following which would perhaps be the rules of evolution or natural.

Prakṛti in Sā-ṁkhya -Yoga vis-a vis Nature

(Value of Nature in Sā-ṁkhya -Yoga)

Prakṛti is a feminine noun made with the root √kr, the prefix pra and the suffix-ktiḥ (Aṣṭādhyāyī 3.3 95)⁵. The root √kr, signifies action. It is the root as in karman (action), kāraṇa (cause, origin) kārya (effect), all emphasising the causal aspect of activity. The prefix pra-shows that it precedes, it has the sense of forward movement, and it indicates a creative force, the urge to create, a biological process. The ktiḥ suffix usually forms a feminine noun. In some theological systems Prakṛti is a material cause of the universe, often a power (sakti) or an emanation of God. In some speculations prakṛti becomes one of the epithets of the “active female principle.” In vedas prakṛti represents the biological, natural person and Saṁkrota, the person fashioned by culture and society perfected through rituals. The direction of movement from the ‘original state’ (Prakṛti) to the ‘modified state’ (vikṛti) seems in general, to express decay. In the ancient medical schools Prakṛti means ‘physical health’, one’s natural condition contrasted to ‘disease’ (vikṛti). In general, the movement from prakṛti to vikṛti expresses decay. This decay is identified as disease by the practitioners of medicine and as suffering by knowers of Sā-ṁkhya and is conceived of as the transformation of prakṛti to vikṛti.

The word prakṛti is used in the modern North Indian language to translate the English word ‘nature’. It also refers to a metaphysical principle of great importance in the Hindu religious traditions, the principle of matter in the Sā-ṁkhya-Yoga systems of religions thought. Prakṛti has arisen from an interest in the conceptualisation of nature and ethics in South Asia combined with an interest in Sā-ṁkhya-Yoga. Here the hierarchisation of spiritual realization might indicate that the experience of merging with Prakṛti was considered the

ultimate goal of some earlier schools of Sā-mkhya-Yoga. Prakṛti refers to ethics and as such has implications for practical life of Sā-mkhya-Yoga conceptualisation of matters. It indicates the concept of disharmony and pain as characteristics of the material world. The world is characterized by interdependence but this interdependence is not a harmonious whole. Living beings depend on destroying the life of other living beings in order to stay alive. But it goes against the spirit of ethics of Sā-mkhya-Yoga as it advocates non-injury as the ultimate goal of life.

'Prakṛti is often translated as 'nature' or 'Nature' in technical texts and texts aimed at introducing or teaching Hinduism to English readers.⁴⁶ A large number of terms in Sanskrit and Prakṛit languages can be translated with the English words 'nature' and 'natural'. Prakṛti is nature in the sense that it is the sources and power from which the things of the world are produced, but the tradition of always translating Prakṛti with nature has functioned more to conceal than to reveal meaning. Prakṛti as the material principle is not concerned with any distinction between nature and culture, the most important dualism is between the ultimate natural principle and the principle of self. The views of 'nature' or 'matter' in the Hindu religious thought encapsulated in the ancient texts in concepts such as ṛta, dharma, pudgala or prakṛti should only with great caution be equated to the views of nature derived from contemporary sciences such as physics or ecology. This is because the intention behind the understanding of matter of the ancient religious speculations and of modern physics is strikingly different. Different matters imply specific views and specific relationships to the environment, often shaped by participation in particular activities. In addition to cultural versions, our activities determine to a large extent our vision of things. "Persons involved in economic activities

⁴⁶ Jha, G. *Tattvakaumudi*, Banaras Hindu University Press, 1964, P- 6-7.

such as hunting, farming and industrial work tend to define nature as an economic resource and to seek control over gross matter. Persons, when involved in contemplative practices such as meditation or yoga, on the other hand, define matter as the object of contemplation and knowledge.⁴⁷

Soteriological mechanics found in such systems as Sāṃkhya-Yoga presupposes a belief in the regularity of the material world, and salvation is based on the proper understanding of this regularity. Nevertheless, the purpose of understanding matter in Sāṃkhya and Yoga is not to use matter, but to get rid of it. On the other hand, it could perhaps be argued that matter from the point of view of salvation can be understood as a resource to be used for the attainment of mokṣa. The correct manipulation of matter thus leads to permanent salvation. Sāṃkhya Yoga advocates the mokṣa for purposes of the self. However, a realisation adds a new dimension to the material principle of Prakṛti. After an interpretation of the material principle, is analyzed therefore a temporary form of release (mokṣa) or a mokṣa like state called merging with prakṛti (Prakṛtilaya). Merging with prakṛti was probably the final goal of some groups of renunciants related to, or probably preceding the classical Sāṃkhya and Yoga systems of religion thought. The idea of merging with Prakṛti is of interest for understanding of matter in Sāṃkhya and Yoga because it focuses on the relationship between the attainment of mokṣa and the conceptual understanding of prakṛti, the belief in a puruṣa principle and on the understanding of the relationship between puruṣa and prakṛti. Then what are the ethical implications of the Sāṃkhya-Yoga understanding of the dualism of the material principle and the principle of consciousness, the self. "Since all beings function according to their merit and demerit in a beginningless flux of redeath and rebirth, and similar embodied consciousness principles exist in

⁴⁷ Larson, G.J. *Classical Samkhya*, Motilal Banarsidass, New Delhi, 1979, P-177.

beings such as plants, animals and humans, rules of ethics include all living beings and never just the human species⁴⁸. This is called environmental ethics in contemporary western societies. The ethics of Sāṁkhya and Yoga made no distinction between the treatment of humans and the treatment of the other living beings which belong to environment. The idea that the behaviour towards plants or animals did not form merit or demerit and thus behaviours towards plants and animals was not part of ethics, was about in the Sāṁkhya-Yoga systems of religious thought. A distinction between human ethics and environmental ethics depends on anthropocentrism and does not apply to the Sāṁkhya-Yoga systems. Sāṁkhya-Yoga holds that interdependency characterizes the material world. Interdependency is however not accompanied by harmony. The world, on the contrary, is a disharmonious place. Interdependency implies that beings are constantly the cause of suffering for others. Species, therefore which depend on each other, are also, from the ethical point of view incompatible. They depend on killing each other for their own life support. No enjoyment is possible without causing pain to others, therefore being embodied implies causing and experiencing suffering.

The analysis of matter in Sāṁkhya-Yoga has a practical purpose – to attain release from transmigration (mokṣa). The ancient sages discovered that matter was such that it could be known in a way that caused ‘liberation’ of the self (Kaivalya). It was possible to work out one’s salvation by one’s effort, without being dependent on the activity of a divine principle. Prakṛti is the productive transforming and material aspect of reality. Prakṛti in Sāṁkhya-Yoga systems of religious thought is the subtle material power within phenomena, which produce their manifest forms. Prakṛti is the producer, the *nature naturans*, the

⁴⁸ Eliade, M. *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom*, Princeton University press, New Jersey, 1969, P- 32.

productive aspect of nature, the inner principle which causes things into beings. Prakṛti expresses the unity and interdependence of the word's gross and subtle matter. It denotes the innate nature of living beings, the word's innate nature, and the material world in its totality. It is the creative material stuff of the world, the generative principle, that from which the word is produced, the eternal rhythm of death and rebirth, withdrawal and manifestation. To refer to S.N. Dasgupta, "Prakṛti in Sāṃkhya-Yoga, with all its emanation or modifications are of the nature of substantive entities as well as of power or force. Prakṛti is dynamic and self-propelled. It is like an organic whole that works from within; it functions by its own inherent capacity (Svabhāva)."⁴⁹ Sāṃkhya-Yoga considers prakṛti as the only active agent; it is both liberator and that from which one is liberated. Sāṃkhya-Yoga being system of religious thought is of the view that matter is based on the goal and the experience of liberation of the soul (Puruṣa). But this does not mean that materiality is useful only for single purpose and as such matter functions for most living beings. According to Sāṃkhya-Yoga, since all things are ultimately transformation of Prakṛti and all things preexist in a subtle state in prakṛti; by knowing Prakṛti one knows all things which are transformations of it in their subtle states. Thus, by knowing the ultimate material basis of all things, which is beyond time and space, one is able to perceive all things. As Sāṃkhya holds that the manifestations of prakṛti which by themselves might be without a single purpose, can be used by living beings for attainment of liberation, and also for the purposes like maintaining a healthy body or growing food in the fields. Materiality functions automatically and salvation is likewise a natural process since materiality is such that a person can use it to attain liberation, and does not presuppose the involvement of a super moral agency. In Sāṃkhya-57,

⁴⁹ Dasgupta, S. *Yoga as Philosophy and Religion*, Motilal Banarsidas Press, New Delhi, P-118-119.

Prakṛti is compared to the milk of a cow. This milk feeds the calf independently of the conscious actions or will of a cow, and the calf is able to use the milk for its own benefit. Likewise, rain comes naturally and some beings such as plants can use it for their benefit. Hence, the ultimate material principle is independent but the manifestations of materiality are interdependent and co-operative. To refer to Jayamaṅgalā on Sk15 which interprets the Kāraṇa-Kārya-vibhaga to mean mutual service, it is clear that in nature all are in the service of all; in nature there is mutual service. Created beings and gross elements mutually work in the interest of each other. Jayamaṅgalā says that *Kāraṇa* is that which gives service and ‘*Kārya*’ is that which receives service. Plants, animals, humans, and divinities all contribute to the proper functioning of the world. Plants keep moisture in the earth; trees keep it cool by providing shade. Humans collect water for irrigation. The elements fill up organic matter to heal wounds. Animals help humans grow food, and humans feed and protect these animals and heal them with drugs when they get ill. Thus in nature there is mutual bond of service. This mutual bond in nature is explained by the unity of prakṛti and the mutual dependency of the three gunas. This is elaborated on by Yoga Darśana. It states how the qualities of the gross elements render favour to the world. Shade is a quality of earth and gives coolness and through the quality of form, pots can be made; water extinguishes fire, fire cooks food and gives light and so on. Thus co-operation and interdependence between things are the characteristics of the manifest materiality. Anything that can help also hurt. The world is characterised not only by interdependency but by disharmony, separation and violence. Acts that help living beings hurt others. An activity like eating food depends on killing living beings. While it renders service to the eater, it deprives others of their lives. Connected things act both harmoniously and

...because they act according to their own nature. Things act according to their own nature and the same activity produces pain to some pain to others. As Sāṁkhya holds even if the activity of prakṛti saves the souls, prakṛti does not have only one purpose because the activity of prakṛti does not force anyone to follow either the path of bhoga or the path of apavarga (release). This would have been the case if prakṛti had only purpose. But the world serves different purpose for different beings and hence interdependency means the suffering and disharmony which characterises the world. If prakṛti had a single purpose, the world would be characterised by harmony but this is not the case. Nature is filled with incompatible species. What is food for one is another living being's death.

The Sāṁkhya-Yoga speculations on materiality are not intended as a 'natural science' does. The things that exist in nature are, according to Sāṁkhya-Yoga are analyzable in terms of 'materiality', especially in terms of the 'constituents' of materiality, but the Sāṁkhya and Yoga are mokṣaśāstras whose aim is to know nature for the sake of learning it. The aim of mokṣaśāstras is not to catalogue the things of the natural world. 'Natural science' could be classified as a bhogaśāstras, that is, knowledge of the objects of the world for the sake of applying them in a favourable ways. In bhogaśāstra, the goal is the transformation of objects into desirable things to be enjoyed.

The ultimate material principle does not exist for the sake of the 'consciousness principle' (Puruṣa) as is often claimed, but it becomes meaningful in association with it and can be used for the sake of salvation. But the manifestation of Prakṛti can be used for other purposes. So there does not have a single purpose. The goal of the manifestation of prakṛti is liberation of the soul in the sense that when this achieved, matter returns to its unmanifest form. But materiality can also be used for 'enjoyment' (Bhoga) by all living beings.

Indeed most living beings are engaged in the transformation of prakṛti for this purpose.

The Sāṃkhya idea of a system of transmigrating beings (Saṃsāra) is closely connected to the ideas of *Kārmaṅ and ethics*. The interest here is particularly on the relationship between humans and non-human living beings. The idea of *Saṃsāra and Karmaṅ* implies that ethics is by definition interspecies ethics. The Sāṃkhya ethics upholds that God, humans, animals and plants are all perceived in nature as involved in mutual service, and this mutual bond of service is explained by the Jaymaṅgalā as based in the idea of single ‘material principle’ (prakṛti) working in the background. The oneness of the ultimate material cause explains the interdependencies of nature. The physical bodies of all living beings, such as birds, plants, humans, animals are constituted by the same matter and they are the sustenance cause of each other. This interdependency is sometimes understood as the mutual interdependency of the natural world where all living beings depend on each other in a system of mutual support.

The ‘normal healthy state’ (Prakṛtistha) of the planet earth has been threatened in the twentieth century by a series of human caused abnormalities (Vikṛtis) such as overpopulation and species extinction. According to the Hindu religions, this might be understood as the decay of the ‘cosmic ethical order’ (dharma). The four goals of human life (puruṣārthāḥ), according to the Hindu religions, are the realisation of religious (rituals), and moral duty, of economic and political power (artha), of aesthetic and sexual enjoyment’ (Kāma), and of ‘liberation from transmigration or Saṃsāra (mokṣa). The attainment of kāma and artha is dependent on the health of the person and environment and thus depend on dharma, which is the regulators of nature and society. But for systems of Sāṃkhya and Yoga the planet earth is irrelevant or it is of little interest in so far as it can provide the material for the mechanics of liberation.

Sāṃkhya and Yoga systems of religious thought are mokṣasāstras. Their goal is the realisation of liberation from Saṃsāra (Mokṣa). This goal is different from the realisation of dharma. Then it can be asked, can a mokṣasāstras systems be irrelevant for the analysis of the ethics of the human nature relationship? It can be argued that the realization of moksa of Sāṃkhya-Yoga is based on a specific understanding of the material world and a specific attitude and behaviour towards it. This understanding of the material world and attitude towards has some implications; it seems, for the understanding of the human-nature relationship. Here we can refer to the Sāṃkhya perception of non-injury. A Sāṃkhya text says – “Non-injury is the root (essence) of every virtue”.⁵⁰ All other virtues are subordinate to non-injury, and non-injury includes the other ethical rules Telling of truth is not a universal criterion but it is tempered by concern for non-injury. Truth should not be uttered for the sake of inflicting harm or others, it produces demerit and impurity. Words should be uttered for the benefit of others, because if they hurt others, they do not produce piety as truth would, but only sin. Truthful words beneficial to all creatures should be uttered after careful consideration. Non-injury towards all living beings was the first step toward salvation. But some acts imply some sort of violence towards others. In nature everything is for the service of everything else. But every act is also accompanied by the bringing of pain to some living beings. One cannot do well to anyone without harming others. Nature is a process of mutual aid and service, but since the process implies constant injury of living beings, one should minimize one’s activities and ultimately try to become liberated from materiality. Here we can refer to Kapil Math in Bihar, a contemporary Sāṃkhya -Yoga institution; there is a picture of Kapil, the mythical founder of Sāṃkhya. “The pictures show him seated underneath a tree in a lonely forest with a crystal clear stream flowing by. A tiger and a deer, two natural enemies

⁵⁰ Patanjali. *The Sāṃkhya-Sūtras of Pañcasikha*, Calcutta University, Press, 1977, P-104.

since one constitutes the food of the other, are pictured lying down together. The picture gives a feeling of peace and serenity.”⁵¹

The ethics of non-injury and teaching of modern ecology can be contrasted. Non-injury towards all living beings is not an ecological teaching. It is in fact, an attempt to reverse ecological relations. It is individualistic and anthropocentric in some important aspects, while the teaching of ecology is holistic and biocentric. The *ahimsā* ethics ideally values each individual living being. According to the teaching of ecology, individual don't matter, only species do. *Ahimsā* reverses the food chain. The food chain is an ecological description of the energy flow from simpler to more complex life forms. Eating in nature, from ecological point of view, is not an ethical act. The tiger that kills an animal for food does not perform a morally responsible act. He does what he has to do in order to continue to live. The act one has to value for the protection of the land. Without natural enemies the deer population might grow so high that they would destroy the carrying capacity of the land. The tigers are, from the ecological point of view, defending the land from being overexploited. They render service to the earth. This is an example of mutual service and interdependency that each living being contributes to the well-being of the whole, is implied in the discussion of *prakṛti* in *Sāṃkhya –Yoga* systems of religious thought. In the food chain ethics, all beings are considered food while the ethics of renunciation says that no living being is food. According to food chain ethics, one acquires power by eating others, while according to the ethics of non-injury one attains power by fasting. The hierarchy of the food chain is based on domination while according to the ideology of non-injury the hierarchy is based on purity.

⁵¹ *Dharmamegha Āraṇya, Epistles of Sāṃkhya Yogin*, Madhupur, Kapil Math, 1989, P-59,

Sāṃkhya and Yoga present, from a contemporary point of view, a somewhat paradoxical view of nature. On the other hand, humans should minimise their impact on their surroundings through a process of nonattachment and withdrawal, beginning with non-injury towards all living beings and ending with a final separation of consciousness from materiality. On the other hand, nature is understood holistically as a system of interdependency. Environmental ethics can be defined as the restraint that human beings put on themselves in their interaction with the rest of nature. Ahiṃsā, while it includes social activity, must primarily be understood as a regulation of human behaviour towards nature and should therefore be viewed as an example of an environmental ethics. The purpose of this ethics was not, of course, 'to save the earth' or to preserve the integrity, stability and beauty of the biotic community for it was developed by religions oriented towards individual salvation, as a part of teleological perspective on the world. The purpose of ahiṃsā was to save the souls of living beings. This ethical system is strikingly different from any western system of environmental ethics. The emphasis on Sā-ṃkhya and Yoga is on taming and restraining nature, but it is the restraining and taming of one's own innate nature. However, this emphasis on restraint and detachment is not antithetical to environmental ethics.

Ecofeminists ethical points towards the value of Nature:

Although ethics, being a normative science, deals with value, yet the interpretation and locus of value in different approaches are different. Even in the different wings of environmental ethics, we have formed different approaches regarding the starting points. We have discussed various forms of feminism and also discussed various forms of ecological theories and thereby seen that the ethical starting points of environmental issues are different. These philosophical points of departure provide differing sources of justification for

the moral considerability of non human natural entities. Consequently, they lead to different recommendations about how to put values into practice, and have various implications for issues of human social justice. Ecological feminists hold that the starting points of moral consider ability is nothing short of condition of being alive. This is justified by saying that life requires death and many of us think of as an *achievably* good human life requires quite a bit of death and destruction. Such type of moral considerability of all living beings might be seen widely implausible. However, such type of universal moral considerability does not rule out there being differences of moral significance among life forms. Rather such type of considerability asks for sensibility and awareness of all living beings. Parallely, ecofeminism values the flourishing of all living beings and communities.

Ecological feminism or ecofeminism has begun with a conception of human well-being which directly follows from normative implications of feminism which desires to promote the flourishing of women and others. Thus the flourishing of women as well as nature is the objective of ecofeminism. The most significant philosophical commitment underlying in ecofeminism is to show in what sense women as well as nature can be conceived as moral agents. It tries to show in what sense women along with non-human beings have moral value. In this regard feminist ethics appears to be ecological feminism. This attention to the social nature of the moral agent is useful for thinking about moral agency as ecological. Thus, ecofeminism tries to form a moral community in which both human and biotic species are members. Thus, it can be said that feminist ethics is a source of wisdom for ecological feminism. Ecofeminism involves values of nature. It involves conceptions of self and community, relationships and hopes for better tomorrows. Ecofeminism ought to reply on careful, consistent, methodologically sound inquiries that are

interested in the well-being of women and nature. Thus ecofeminism is not an isolated sphere of inquiry.

It is important to point here that ecofeminism addresses nature in terms of oppression and mistreatment of both women and nature. Ecofeminism holds that women as well as nature have full moral value as moral agents and objects. Consequently, the interest of the oppressed communities (women and nature) is ethically significant. Historically as well as philosophically both women and nature have been considered less than fully significant moral beings. This apprehension leads to the subordination and subjugation of both women and natures. Ecofeminism, therefore, revolts against the propensity of under valuation of both women and nature. We have witnessed many sound justifications in favour of the mistreatment of women and nature in traditional ethical theory. Ecofeminism strives to rectify it by incorporating more accurate assumptions about the value of women and nature. To quote vandana Shiva, “.....the recovery of the feminine principles is based in inclusiveness. It is a recovery of nature, women and man of creative forms of being and perceiving. In nature it implies seeing nature as a live organism. In women, it implies seeing women as productive and active. Finally, in men the recovery of the feminine principle implies a relocation of action and activity to create life-enhancing, not life-reducing and life threatening societies.”⁵²

Moreover, the notion of care perspective of women also reflects a form of moral reasoning. Care perspective of women is motivated by a sense of responsibility and caring for intimate connections. Moreover, women’s moral reasoning may prove fruitful for theories seeking sources for moral guidance beyond traditional male-identified inquiries. Ruddick himself articulates a whole system of material thinking or peace politics and ethics on generalizations concerning women’s experiences and talent as caretakers. The

⁵² Shiva, V. *Staying Alive*, Kali for Women, New Delhi, 1989, P-53.

ethics of care developed by Nroodings turned the female moral voice into a moral for all. Some feminists even hold that women allegedly have superior moral capacities that have been associated with the claim that these capacities best suit women for domestic as well as other pursuits. This point can be highlighted by Vandana Shiva "it is such a recovery of life in diversity, of a diversity shared and protected that the invisible Chipko struggles for giving value and significance to prakrti, to nature as the source, to the smallest element of nature in its renewal, giving value to connective needs, not private action, women in Kangad, Sevalgaon, Rawatgaon work in partnership with nature to recreate and regenerate. Without signboard without world Bank loans, without wire fencing they are working to allow nature's play in reproducing the life of the forest grasses and shrubs, small trees and big, each useful to nature if not to man, are all coming above again."⁵³ There is a misconception that a concern for nature's rights is to ignore people's rights, and that the sustainable use of soil goes against the demands for food for the hungry. Yet it is not satisfying the needs of the poor that has killed fertile soils through desertification and diseases. Water-logging and salinity, micro-nutrient deficiency, toxicity and the depletion of organic matter are direct and inevitable consequences of a philosophy of agriculture guided by the modern patriarchal principle of profit-maximization. The recovery of soils can only take place through a philosophy which sees soil fertility, not cash in agricultural capital, which sees women, not fertilizers factories, as nutrient suppliers, and which puts nature and human needs, not markets, at the centre of sustainable agriculture and land use. If soils and people are to live, we must stop converting soil fertility into cash and productive lands into deserts. Hence feminists' ethics have investigated the ethical meanings of trust, anger, integrity, self esteem and sympathy in moral life in particular. Thus, the goal or objective of ecofeminism is to construct, uncover and articulate ethics that

⁵³ Ibid.1989 , P-93.

addresses the patterns and particularities of human agencies that create a world riddled with incredible degree of environmental destruction and human oppression. It tries to correlate women and nature and thereby tries to restore the value of nature.

