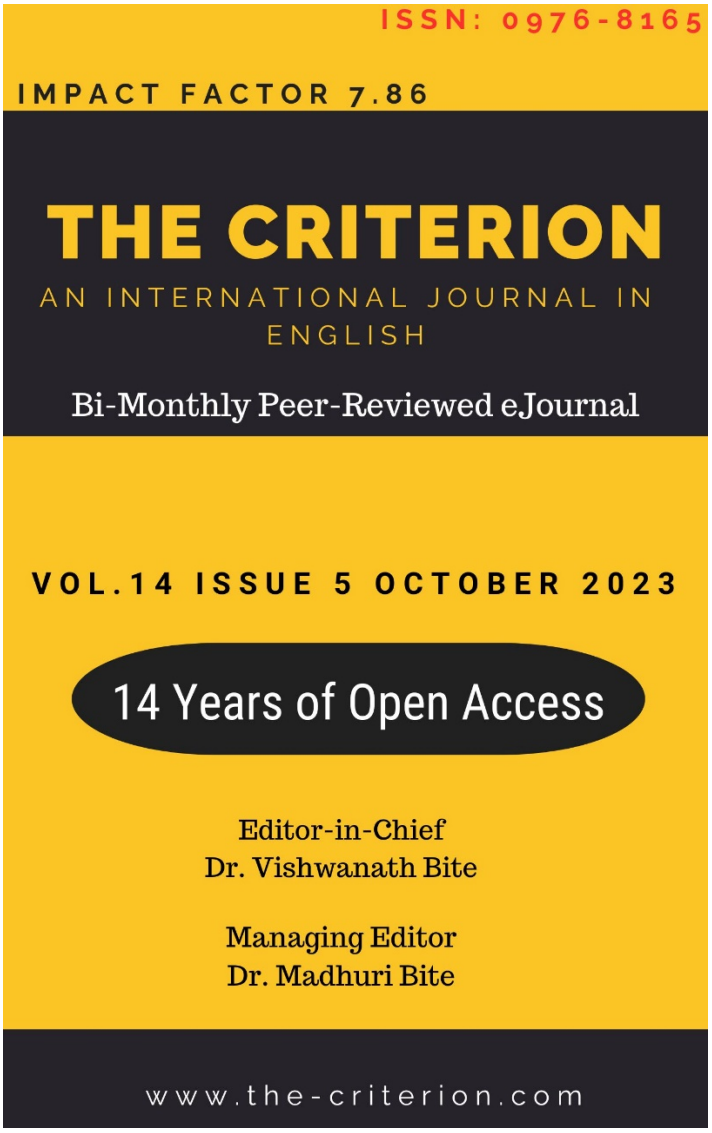

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Two Sustainable Pillars of Development: Women and Nature from an Ecofeminist Perspective

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Abstract:

Worldwide, it is now accepted that two sustainable pillars of development upon which the progress of any nation depends are women and nature. This age of development is supervised by scientific knowledge, which has taken control over all traditional and indigenous knowledge and excluded those practising it for many years, especially women. In our male chauvinist society, women are treated as inferior to men at large, women are always suppressed and subjugated by males. Ecofeminism is a branch of feminism that links the oppression of women to the destruction of the environment. The theory of ecofeminism works on the notion that the oppression of women and the exploitation of the physical environment/nature are interlinked because women were traditionally seen as closer to nature and were often responsible for the care and maintenance of the home and its resources. This is one of the most discussed topics of the Contemporary Era. Development, ecology, and Women share a very close relationship. Major ecofeminists from India named Vandana Shiva's book *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Development* portrayed a positive relationship between women, ecology, and development very effectively. Vandana Shiva puts the urgent need for feminine-principle-based development. Ecofeminists portray a close connection between ecological crisis, development, oppression of women and nature, patriarchy, and colonisation. Ecofeminism makes us understand the close connection between women and nature, and how women struggled in the past to sustain the Environment. Major Ecofeminists from all over the world neglected scientific development, which only focuses on profit and neglects humanity and ecology.

Keywords: Ecofeminism, feminine principle, oppression, development, ecology.

Development is a human and ecological term. Ecology is the place of every living organism, including humans and their physical environment. Women and nature share a close relationship. Women and nature are two sustainable pillars of development. Gender-based Violence due to the ecological crisis will become a bigger problem if is not tackled correctly. This age of scientific development and progress guided by scientific knowledge began destroying our lives without calculating how fast our lives were ruined. In the book by Vandana Shiva *'Staying Alive'*, it is mentioned that the death of nature is a serious threat to human survival. The whole planet is dying at a fast speed. Everything that is essential for our survival and sustainable living like soil, water, air, tropical forests, etc., is depleting and decaying. She is a popular ecofeminist from India, who shows the bad side of modern science, which dominates women and treats them as less knowledgeable and unproductive.

Ecofeminism is a branch of feminism that links the oppression of women to the destruction of the environment. It started in the 1970s and 1980s with the publication of works such as The Daughters of Mother Earth: The Script by Carolyn Merchant and The Death of Nature by Carolyn Merchant. Ecofeminist theory draws on the intersection of feminism and environmentalism to analyse the connections between the exploitation and degradation of the environment and the subordination of women. Ecofeminists advocate for the protection of the environment and women's rights and seek to challenge the patriarchal systems of oppression that are responsible for environmental destruction. Ecofeminists presented the fact that the oppression of women is interlinked with the exploitation and destruction of the environment. This was because women were traditionally seen as closer to nature and were often responsible for the care and maintenance of the home and its resources. Ecofeminists argued that the same patriarchal systems of oppression that caused women's subordination also caused the environment's degradation. They argued that women had a unique role in our lives for sustainable development.

We all forget that in ancient times, our earth and women were worshipped as Mother Nature and Shakti, respectively. Both women and nature have the power from which all life arises. According to Vandana Shiva, we all forget the ‘’Feminine Principle” associated with women and nature. In India, the Chipko movement of rural women of Gharwal, Uttarakhand, is one of the famous historical movements that was against the destruction of our ecosystem. These women stood against violence created by nature for the sake of development. These forests act as a source of their livelihood and survival. Ecofeminism is the study of the relationship between women and nature. Forests provide many essential items to humans, like food, fodder, manure, medicinal herbs, etc. All these items are essential for living a

sustainable life. People in developing countries like Asia, Africa, and India are dependent on natural resources for the fulfillment of basic needs of their lives. If we destroy these natural resources, it will have a worse impact on the tribal population. Ecofeminism advocates for gender equality as a fundamental aspect of sustainable development. In the current era, Women have equal access to education, healthcare, economic opportunities, and decision-making processes, so they can contribute more effectively to sustainable development initiatives. Gender equality also helps address the root causes of environmental degradation by challenging patriarchal power structures.

Ecofeminism recognises the importance of reproductive rights and family planning in the context of sustainable development. Empowering women to make informed choices about family size can help alleviate population pressures on natural resources and contribute to long-term sustainability. Ecofeminism acknowledges that women often play critical roles in peacebuilding and conflict resolution efforts. Reducing conflicts and violence is essential for sustainability, as conflict can exacerbate environmental degradation and disrupt communities. Ecofeminism emphasises the importance of recognising the intersectionality of women's experiences. Women from marginalised communities, including indigenous women and women of colour, often face unique environmental challenges. Efforts to empower these women and address their basic needs are integral to ecofeminist sustainable development.

In summary, ecofeminism asserts that women have a vital role to play in sustainable development through their historical roles as stewards of nature, their advocacy for environmental causes, their possession of traditional knowledge, their community-building efforts, and their potential to drive gender equality and peace. Recognising and supporting the contributions of women is essential for addressing environmental and social challenges and achieving a more equitable and sustainable world.

From an ecofeministic perspective, the role of women in sustainable development is multifaceted and crucial. Women frequently play vital roles in community development and social cohesion. Their leadership in building strong, resilient communities can contribute to sustainable development by fostering cooperation, resource sharing, and environmental conservation within communities.

Prominent aspects of development are sustainability and gender. Sustainability has become an essential aspect since the 1980s. Violence against women started when we started thinking economically. Vandana Shiva and Maria Mies in their book *'Ecofeminism'* wrote that "The more the government talks about 'inclusive growth' and 'financial inclusion', the more it excludes the contribution of women to the economy and society. It means we forget

the contribution of women in our households and the outside world. We started giving them the tag of non-productive. According to the Patriarchal economics model, production for sustenance is computed as 'non-production'. The transformation of value into disvalue, labour into non-labour, and knowledge into non-knowledge is achieved by the most powerful number that rules our lives: the patriarchal construct of GDP, gross domestic product, which commentators have started to call the gross domestic problem". (Shiva and Mies preface xv)

The WID (Women in Development) movement in the 1970s Criticised scientific development, thinking that women were only taking welfare benefits and were deprived of all development policies. After this, a new approach was enhanced by feminists, who think that women actually contribute to economic activities but their contribution is not recognised and valued. After the development of Ecofeminism new theme of WED emerged in the 1980s in all developed countries, which includes the sustainable part of development. WED shows that women have a strong connection with nature and the impact of environmental degradation on women's lives.

Violence against women is not limited to developing countries. Research studies show that natural disasters such as floods, droughts, and bushfires have increased the risk of domestic violence in rural regions. One of the reasons for this is the social and psychological pressure arising from loss of income resulting from the growing impact of climate change on the agricultural sector.'(UNFCC) Violence against women and nature is a severe problem that came into more effect after we started doing Scientific development. Actuality, Climate change in the world due to modernisation and our run toward development leads to gender-based violence and discrimination. A report by CARE found that "in most disasters, women and girls are worst affected". (UNFCC)

According to an IUCN study, Environmental destruction and degradation is a crucial factor for gender-based violence. "Environmental degradation now affects our lives in ways that are becoming impossible to ignore, from food to jobs to security. This study shows us that the damage humanity is inflicting on nature can also fuel violence against women worldwide. This link has so far largely overlooked," said Dr Grethel Aguilar, IUCN Acting Director General**.** (IUCN)

In her book *"The Violence of the Green Revolution"*, Vandana Shiva wrote that "The Green Revolution was predicated on the assumption that technology is a superior substitute for nature, and hence a means for producing limitless growth, unconstrained by nature's limits. However, the assumption of nature as a source of scarcity, and technology as a source of abundance, leads to the creation of technologies which create new scarcities in nature

through ecological destruction." (Shiva 24) So, if we humans are running toward development without thinking about environmental destruction, we will ultimately be moving toward a threat to our survival. We all need to focus on the growth that is without harming anyone.

New development in the agriculture sector, like the use of toxic chemicals and pesticides, creates violence against women and nature. The use of so many chemicals has led to a number of health risks and environmental destruction, which include water, soil, and air pollution. New Scientific development like the use of nuclear power plants will have an adverse effect on the health of women and creates cancer among women who are residing near the plant. The addition of nuclear waste to our environment will affect our ecosystem, and our wildlife will be disturbed. The development of higher-scale hydropower projects like dams, has had a distressing effect on the lives of native women, who are mainly dependent on their daily work on rivers and streams. The construction of new higher projects will lead to displacement and interruption in the everyday living of the people. The development of large-scale oil and gas projects will lead to more gender-based violence. In many countries, there has been a rise in reports of rape, physical and sexual abuse, and exploitation against women who live in or near areas of extraction. The development of large-scale mining projects harmed the health and safety of women and children.

Women are speaking out against the ferocity caused by scientific development and engaging in public discourse. Women are forming different groups, organisations, and networks to raise their voices against the negative impacts of scientific development on women and nature. Females on a large scale are researching to find out better root causes of violence against women and nature and to create a solution that is evidence-based. Women are fighting for policy changes and legal reforms to protect women and nature from violence caused by scientific development. Females are using their influence in business, academia, and government to influence decision-making processes and ensure that women's voices are heard. Women are using their platforms to challenge the narrative of scientific development as a source of progress and to highlight how it can be used to oppress and harm women and nature. Women are creating art and storytelling to document the impact of scientific development on women and nature. They are leading campaigns and protests to push for the end of violence against women and nature. Vandana Shiva's major ecofeminist from India focuses on the feminine principle, which is non-violent and sustainable, which is the ultimate solution to the problems arising through modern science and development. Vandana Shiva, a major ecofeminist, emphasises -maldevelopment. She says that in today's world, what we

call development, in actuality, is called maldevelopment. It results from the thoughts and actions of man. Maldevelopment results from the negligence of the integrity of nature and the interdependence of man over nature. Man's dualistic and reductionistic perspective violates harmony between women and men and men with nature. If man wants to live peacefully, he has to follow the path of ecological survival.

Ecofeminism emphasises the interconnectedness of all life forms and systems on planet earth. It argues that the domination of women and the exploitation of nature are two sides of the same coin, driven by a mindset of control and domination. Recognising this interconnectedness is essential for sustainable development, as it promotes a holistic approach to addressing social and environmental issues.

Ecofeminism advocates a shift from an ethic of domination and exploitation to an ethic of care. It means recognising the value of nurturing and sustaining life, whether it be in the context of relationships between people or the relationship between humans and the environment. Sustainable development should prioritise care for women and nature, fostering a sense of responsibility and stewardship. Ecofeminism asserts that the subordination of women and the exploitation of nature are intertwined because both are marginalised and oppressed by dominant power structures. Empowering women, both economically and socially, is seen as a vital component of sustainable development. When women are given agency and voice, they can play actively in shaping policies and practices that promote sustainability.

Ecofeminism highlights that marginalised communities, often led by women, are disproportionately affected by environmental degradation and climate change. Sustainable development should prioritise environmental justice by addressing the unequal distribution of environmental benefits and burdens, ensuring that marginalised communities have access to clean air, water, and a healthy environment. Ecofeminists advocate for a shift away from exploitative and extractive practices that harm women and the environment. It includes transitioning to sustainable agriculture, renewable energy sources, and responsible consumption patterns. Such practices are essential for achieving long-term ecological and social well-being. Ecofeminism recognises the importance of changing cultural narratives and worldviews that perpetuate the domination of women and nature. Promoting a culture that values equality, diversity, and cooperation over hierarchy and competition is crucial for sustainable development.

From an ecofeminism perspective, the connection between women and nature is a crucial aspect of sustainable development. Ecofeminism is a philosophy that combines

environmentalism and feminism, emphasising the links between the exploitation of nature and the oppression of women. It argues that both the domination of women and the degradation of the environment are rooted in similar underlying power structures and worldviews. The concept of women and nature as sustainable pillars of development is built upon these principles: Ecofeminism highlights the interconnectedness of all life forms and ecosystems. This perspective encourages a holistic understanding of development that values and respects the inherent worth of both women and nature. Just as women have historically been marginalised and undervalued, nature has been exploited for profit without considering its intrinsic value. Ecofeminism draws parallels between the oppression of women and the exploitation of nature. It suggests that societies that devalue and subordinate women are more likely to exploit and degrade the environment. By recognising and addressing these interconnected oppressions of women and nature, ecofeminism advocates for a more just and sustainable world. Women often have deep-rooted connections to their communities and environments. Traditional knowledge and practices passed down through generations often hold valuable insights for sustainable resource management. Emphasising the role of women in decision-making processes related to environmental issues can lead to more balanced and ecologically sensitive outcomes. Women and nature have been associated with nurturing and caretaking roles. Ecofeminists argue that adopting care-centered ethics can lead to more sustainable practices. Prioritising care for both human and non-human entities can counterbalance the often-destructive consequences of profit-driven exploitation. Empowering women and giving them equal opportunities can contribute to more sustainable development. When women have agency and decision-making power, they are more likely to advocate for policies prioritising social and environmental well-being over short-term economic gains. They often play vital roles in agricultural systems and resource management. Women knowledge of local ecosystems can be instrumental in conserving biodiversity. When we include women in conservation efforts, it can lead to more holistic and practical strategies that benefit both local communities and the environment. Ecofeminism recognises that oppression and privilege intersect in complex ways. Women from marginalised communities often bear intersections is essential for achieving equitable and sustainable development.

By considering women and nature as interconnected pillars of sustainable development, ecofeminism encourages a shift away from the dominant model of development that prioritises economic growth at the expense of social and environmental well-being. Ideally, it promotes a more inclusive, compassionate, and holistic approach that acknowledges the intrinsic value of both human and non-human life. According to an

ecofeminist perspective, women and nature are seen as interconnected and interdependent pillars of sustainable development. To empower women, promoting care ethics, addressing environmental justice issues, and shifting to sustainable practices are all essential steps toward achieving a more equitable and sustainable future for human society and the natural world.

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