

# Engendering the Feminine Unconscious through the Eco-Feminist Psychoanalytical Theory

Dr. Jaseedha. K

Associate Professor, Dept. of English, Mannaniya College of Arts & Science, Pangode, Trivandrum, Kerala.

## ABSTRACT

The research paper envisages to overview eco-feminism from the perspective of psycho analysis. Employing the concepts of psycho analysis provides an alternate view of the internal psycho-dynamics of complex and enigmatic characters in a work of fiction.

**Keywords:** *Eco-feminism, Psycho analysis, consciousness, eco-criticism*

## INTRODUCTION

The tryst between the diverse trajectories of psychology and literature transpired at some point amidst the ground breaking socio-political and ideological convulsions and turmoil which rocked the foundation of life and social structure at the cusp of nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Nevertheless, the concept of personality had manifested itself from the epochs of the medieval times. The synthesis between of the prime conceptual theories of psychology, namely, the psychoanalytic, and the feminist literary theory, though it lagged behind somehow to as late as the 1980's, has proven itself to be the most constant amalgamation. It has emerged itself into the most evolving area of literary studies since its conceptualization. The expedient union between the two was not without its initial hiccups or conflicts as most feminists were reluctant to accept Freud's biased constructs of femininity. Yet, they later conciliated to it to some extent by modifying and revising it to make it more sensible and viable to their ideologies. Feminist theoreticians like Lucy Irigary and Helen Cixous were the foremost figures

who consistently questioned the Freudian stance on femininity. Ecofeminism, an offshoot of environmentalism, incontrovertibly connects women and nature.

An informed and inventive eye to human behaviour can identify a deterministic pattern and the unconscious power-dynamics that powerfully underplays in the natural universe. Nevertheless, feminists were reluctant to accept this unison. As the very kernel position of feminism was posited on woman's subjective identity, only a psychoanalytical edge could explain the fragmented self and the subject of the unconscious. Now it has enabled the much needed and inevitable re-evaluations for feminist analysis. Also, as women share the same concerns all over the world and as it gets reflected in the realm of literature, the framework of Psychology seems to have provided a common ground and an exceptional tool to explain their struggles on yet another dimension for its variegated approaches.

The conscious mind of women had been hidden in all those epochs when women enjoyed quite little space, physically as well as mentally. The conscious effort to colonize the mind through moral education and attempts to rewrite femininity as an agenda started specifically during the eighteenth and nineteenth century with the emergence of the journals and the evolution of fiction. Consequently, women imbibed and engendered their own specific language of sexuality, despite the concerted efforts by Conduct books of the age to reconstruct the concept of an ideal female subject, for the

society. Although from Middle Ages to modern age conduct book literature envisaged to rewrite femininity, it was in the nineteenth century, that the writers directly tried to inculcate proprieties of feminine conduct through their fictional writings, especially, via their novels of manner. In the medieval literature personality of a character was sidelined as action was given a centerstage. The conduct book- attempts to colonize the mind of women in the guise of moral education was actually one of the hidden agendas that patriarchy had successfully put into practice.

Still there were many lonely voices which strove, although not so explicitly, to redraw the boundaries of feminine conduct. From many pioneering women writers like Aphra Benn to prominent figures as Fanny Burney conscientiously exhibits resistance these patriarchal efforts to constrain feminine identity and voices. The intellectual groundwork was laid and seeds were strewn for the oncoming resistances in France upholding personal dignity at the time when French revolution was simmering.

Employing the concepts of psychological theory can to a certain extent divulge the diverse yet specific human behaviour that encompasses human relationship of the variable characters portrayed in literature. Psychoanalytic theory might provide an alternate point of view by underpinning the narrative voice against the grain of the story. Psychological deterministic pattern becomes evident amidst the enmeshed paradigm of radical suppression embodied in literature especially poetry, drama and novels when analyzed. By sheer virtue of the internal psychodynamics and the stunning conceptual framework of an inward life, emotionally complex characters emerge out of their enigmatic personae.

Since women's subjective identity is crucial in the exploration of feminist criticism the subject of unconscious has an ever-expanding dimension. Of the many currents of feminist psychoanalytic literary

criticism, the one which produced a strongest impact was that which 'loop' its impulse from object relations theory. For instance, fictional works like Toni Morrison's *Beloved* engenders and explores the mother-daughter relationship and its diverse trajectories. Elizabeth Wright too has highlighted that of "the relations between women, most notably are those of mothers and daughters". Running counter to Freud-Lacanian theory, it took as its theme plenitude rather than lack, connection rather than castration, celebrating pre-Oedipal closeness between mother and daughter rather than pre-Oedipal loss (Hirsch, 1992).

Toni Morrison's oeuvre envisages a consciousness which is essentially that of eco-feminism. It can be largely traced back to her works where she highlights the connections between women and the nature. Using images of a tree engrained to the body of the protagonist, she attempts symbolize the deep rooted and universal sufferings of the women, individual as well as collective. This consciousness of eco-feminism is mirrored and plainly reflected in *Beloved* where 'women are naturalized' and 'Nature is feminized'.

Although a vast majority of feminist critics like Irigaray and Helen Cixous have been consistently reluctant to accept Freud's biased constructions of femininity. They have consistently questioned his efforts to define femininity, and through their revisions they have offered to revise his constructs of femininity. A Feminist ecological thinking informs and integrates the innate kinship that Nature shares with women. The ecological dimension of psycho-analysis seeks to explore nature and human mind from an eco-critical perspective. Eco-feminist analysis not only explores the connections between women and nature but also tries to address the underlying parallels between the oppression of nature and the oppression of women.

Gendering Nature has now become the essential theoretical aspect central to any ecofeminist critique. Patriarchal perceptions and values that gendered social roles and

nurtured roles and marginalization needs to be healed by redefining alternative modes of reductionist paradigms. An Ecological feminist philosophy is the antidote to heal the reductionist ideologies of disintegration that ensnares the consciousness of the millennium, dividing man and Nature.

**Acknowledgement:** None

**Conflict of Interest:** None

**Source of Funding:** None

#### REFERENCES

1. Biehl, Janet (1991) *Rethinking eco-feminist politics*. Boston: South End Press.

2. Isoke, Z. (2019). *Bell hooks: 35 years from margin to center - feminist theory: From margin to center*. by Bell Hooks. New York: Routledge, [1984] 2015.
3. Wright, Elizabeth. *Psycho-analytic criticism: A Reappraisal*. Cambridge: polity press, 1998.
4. Zein, L. F., & Setiawan, A. R. (2019). General overview of Ecofeminism.
5. Gellner, Earnest. *The psychoanalytic Movement: The Cunning of Unreason*. (1985). London: Fontana P, 1993.7

How to cite this article: Jaseedha. K. Engendering the feminine unconscious through the eco-feminist psychoanalytical theory. *International Journal of Research and Review*. 2021; 8(12): 270-272. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.52403/ijrr.20211233>

\*\*\*\*\*