

## *Chapter II*

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### **Regrounding: The Bonding of Women with Nature**

Nature is mostly referred to as the feminine part of the life cycle, concerned with fertility, bounty and reproduction. Women are often associated with nature, especially with seasons, as ‘the rebirth of the land’ in the spring time. Connecting women with nature is found even in the ancient classical mythology. Early mythology has several goddesses who are strongly connected to nature. Nature is otherwise known as ‘mother-nature’ because so many aspects of nature are born from the earth, which is linked with the birth of a child from the womb of the mother.

“So on her fares, and to the border comes  
Of Eden, where delicious paradise,  
Now nearer, crowns with her enclosure green”  
Of goodliest trees loaden with fairest fruit,  
Blossoms and fruits at once of golden hue”

(Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Book 4, lines 131-3, 147-8)

Andree Collard in her work *Rape of the Wild* values and reclaims women’s biology and reproductive role. “The identity and destiny of women and nature are merged.” *Rape of the Wild* (137). She celebrates women’s bodies and their biologically linked roles such as motherhood. She considers patriarchy, the enemy of nature. ‘Nothing links the human animal and nature as profoundly as woman’s reproductive system which enables her to share the experience of bringing forth and nourishing life with the rest of the living world’ (ibid 12)

Mother Nature is a common word that personifies nature to the form of a mother for the life-giving and nurturing aspects by nature. The word 'nature' comes from the Latin word *natura* meaning birth. In Greek mythology Gaia was a goddess who was personified as Mother Nature. Persephone, the goddess of harvest in Greek mythology was abducted by Pluto, god of Hades and her mother Demeter's appealed to Pluto whose Iron heart melted and he allowed Persephone to go back every six months. Her grief for her daughter in the realm of the dead was reflected in the barren winter months and her joy was reflected in the bountiful summer months of her return.

Nature is feminized because it is seen as possessing the same qualities as women. Women are seen as being domestic, pious, moral, pure, gentle, kind, graceful, simple and beautiful. Men and women are different in their characteristics. Men are seen as hard working, industrial, rational, assertive, independent and proud. These aspects of men are not considered to be connected with nature. So nature is seen as the embodiment of all the characteristics of women.

In western society also, earlier women were treated as inferior to men and nature treated as inferior to culture. Women are considered to be close with nature than men. Women's physiological connection with birth and child care represents the abilities of nature itself. Eco feminists focus on these connections and analyse the four pillars of patriarchal society as sexism, racism, class exploitation and environmental destruction. They also portray oppressed races and social classes as being closely connected with nature.

Dualism and hierarchy are the qualities of patriarchy, which underlie the oppression of women and destruction of natural systems. Feminist and ecological perspectives are interdependent. There is a systematic domination, they claim, over both women and nature,

underpinned by a conceptual set of dualisms. These dualisms would be familiar as man/woman, mind/body, reason/emotion, human/nature, active/passive, and so forth.

Eco-feminism grew out of a history that relentlessly justified the abuse, domination and hence oppression of nature, women and all other 'lower orders of society'. Ecofeminism also grew out of a hidden history of societies bound to the earth and based on nature religions of the Goddess. Susan Griffin mentions in her work published at 1984 that, Women have been symbolically and mythologically linked with 'nature' (3). There is an intrinsic relationship in the way in which the natural world and the one another are treated.

Feminism is a philosophy that advocates equal economic, political and social rights and opportunities for women. Kingsolver uses her feminist beliefs, her interest in political issues, and her background in biology as vehicles to explicate these themes throughout the novels. Barbara Kingsolver was greatly influenced by the writings of Friedan and Steinam and so she writes about women, their struggles to survive, their relationship with each other, and their commitment to motherhood. Kingsolver introduces feminist issues that she feels strongly about like childcare, sexual harassment and the capabilities of women in typically male-dominated workplaces, through the novels.

Eco-feminism has explored the association of women with nature that appears in religion, theology, art, and literature. Documenting such connections and making them integral to the project of Eco-feminism is often considered as Eco-feminism's most promising contribution to its own existence. Eco-feminism is then presented as offering alternative spiritual symbols such as Gaia and goddess symbols, spiritualities or theologies. Appreciating such symbolic woman-nature connections help to understand the potential of women.

Eco-feminist writers claim that there are important connections between the unjustified dominations of women, people of colour, children and the poor with the unjustified domination of nature. Nature is considered with feminist issues because understanding it helps one understand the oppression, subordination (or) domination of women. According to eco-feminists, trees, water, food production, animals, toxins and naturism are feminist issues because considering them helps to understand the interconnections and the domination of women and nature.

Karen J Warren has explained at length that, women and nature are inter-connected in various ways. Kingsolver's novels are considered under this premise, whenever women and children are troubled or over ruled by the patriarchal society. Barbara Kingsolver never forgets to symbolize them through the 'sufferings' of nature. This kind of domination connecting the female and nature is called the symbolic connection of Eco-feminism, which is the major theme in these novels taken for research.

Karen J Warren, the feminist writer has spoken on environmental issues, feminism and critical thinking widely. Her *Ecofeminist Philosophy: A Western Perspective on what it is and why it matters?* (2000), talks of the ecological feminist philosophy as the name of a diversity of philosophical approaches to the variety of different connections between feminism and the environment. These different perspectives reflect not only different feminist perspectives but also different understandings of nature, and solution to pressing environmental problems. There are eight kinds of connections that are basic and important to understand the connections between feminism and the environment.

The first and primary connection between feminism and the environment is historical and causal. Historical information is used to bring out the twin domination of women and

nature. The historical pervasiveness of patriarchal domination of women and nature has led some eco-feminists to suggest that androcentric view is the root cause of environmental destruction.

Historical perspectives on the causes of the unjustified dominations of women and nature are disagreeing and unconvincing. Ecofeminist historian Carolyn Merchant's perspective is that the separation of culture maybe from nature or, that the culture/nature dualism is a product of the scientific revolution. She describes two conflicting images of nature - one an older, Greek image of nature as organic, benevolent, nurturing female, and a newer, modern image of nature as passive, dead, and mechanistic.

Merchant argues that the historical shift from an organic to a mechanistic model helped to justify the exploitation of the earth by conceiving of it as unmotivated matter. For example, mining was prohibited in ancient times because it was thought to be mining the earth's womb, early Greek metaphors of nature as alive and nurturing female, supported the view that mining was wrong. According to Merchant, a conception of nature as passive matter removed moral barriers to mining that were in place when nature was conceived as organic, nurturing female. Merchant's historical perspective informs the analyses of the deep conceptual roots of the unjustified dominations of women and nature.

In the novel, *Animal Dreams* Kingsolver's Arizona mining country with its depiction of the fictional town of Grace faces the economic and environmental threat posed by an unnamed mining corporation in 1985 and 86. *Holding the Line* and *Animal Dreams* both are developed out of Kingsolver's journalistic assignment to cover the Phelps Dodge strike in 1983, and are shaped by the political context in which they were written. Kingsolver's work informs the contemporary academic and political context.

It has representations of the past, and her work also incorporates a chronological emphasis on past events shaping actions and perceptions in the present.

Kingsolver's representation of the political struggles facing mining communities over twenty years ago is not only shaped by the present, but also informs about the history that is the backdrop of the current struggles. The male characters in *Animal Dreams* are resigned to the mining companies' pollution of their orchards, believing that "the trees can die and we can just go somewhere else, and as long as we fry up the bacon for them in the same old pan...it would be home" (AD 179).

*Prodigal Summer* revises human relationships with nature through a non-androcentric representation of human relationships, with Lusa exclaiming to Cole "You're nature, I'm nature" (PS 48). This is symbolically underlined by the moths, which "tell their love across the fields by scent" (PS 50), just as men are drawn to women, Lusa, Deanna and Nannie identify so strongly with their environment that they see the patterns of their own experience. The novel's female characters are aware of their alliance with ecology and live with the knowledge that "solitude is only a human presumption" (PS 3). Kingsolver equalizes the androcentric idea that men are independent from nature, a foundation which has traditionally polarised masculinity and femininity. The need to balance gender, nature and society while recognising their interdependence is central to Kingsolver's recurring theme across all of her work.

Carolyn Merchant and Vandana Shiva, eco-feminist writers focus on cultural and scientific changes that occurred during the scientific changes and sanctioned the exploitation of nature, commercial and industrial expansion, and the subordination of women. Natives were plucked out of their place and were brutally shattered for the greed of a few men.

The Cherokee was one of the so-called Five Civilized Tribes that was moved by the United States government from the south-eastern United States to Oklahoma in the 1830's and 1840's. The Cherokees established a governmental system similar to that of the United States and adopted a constitution that declared them a sovereign nation, meaning that they were not subject to the laws of any other state or nation. They lived peacefully until gold was discovered on their land in the late 1820's. So they were made to get out of their place and during that march many Cherokees died. This incident was called the trail of tears.

Mayans are another type of tribal community whose lot is portrayed in the novel, and they were also forced to get out of their homeland for fear of their own lives. The novel also explains about the sufferings of the character of Estevan and Esperanza, who were Mayans, as well as refugees. Mattie the tire shop owner hides and helps the illegal immigrants to safety. They represent the real historical political refugees who were lucky enough to escape the brutal, repressive regimes of the time in Latin America. During the next two years, the Sanctuary movement grew. United States became a safe haven for political refugees. Despite the efforts by the government to control the Sanctuary movement, the united community of sanctuary workers remained committed to providing aid to Central American political refugees. Kingsolver herself helped refugees from Chile, El Salvador and Guatemala in 1986.

Environmental historian Carolyn Merchant in her book, *The Death of Nature* (1980) argues that “another opposing image of nature as female was also present though not prevalent: wild and uncontrollable nature that could render violence, storms, droughts and general chaos.” The novel *Flight Behaviour* explains how the migratory route of the monarch butterflies was disrupted, and that the stunningly beautiful view is really a



warning sign or ecological disaster. The sudden rain and cold of Appalachian winter could be the demise of this delicate species. They had to move away from that mountain to look for a warmer place. She was able to relate the environmental disaster of landslide and flood which occurred in Mexico which is the habitat of these butterflies. Because of the natural disaster that ruined their habitat, butterflies flew to their farm land. Dellarobia realised the fact that “when you clear-cut a mountain it can cause a landslide” (FB 234). Val Plumwood in her work published in 1993 *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* argues that the unjustified domination of nature was the root cause of rationalism, that philosophical tradition that both defines rationality as the hallmark of humanness and elevates humans over nonhuman animals and nature on grounds of humans’ superior abilities to reason.

Historical and causal links between the dominations of women and nature are located in conceptual structures of domination and the conceptual basis of this twin domination of women and nature located in value dualisms. Hierarchical value dualisms also include reason/emotion, mind/body, culture/nature, human/nature, and man/women dichotomies. Emotion, body, nature, and women are regarded as inferior to that which is historically associated with reason, mind, culture, human and men.

The shared custody of the illegally-adopted Native American Turtle in *Bean Trees* suggests the possibility of compromise between the apparently dichotomous divisions of individual and community, a compromise which Kingsolver herself posits as central to all her fiction. Mary Mellor uses a historical materialist approach to criticize capitalist patriarchy. She argues that although both men and women meditate between culture and

nature, they do not do so equally. This is because the conditions of exploitation and domination affect women and nature differently than they affects men and culture.

In *Animal Dreams*, Kingsolver highlights the need for a balance to be struck between the rigid dichotomy according to which land has to be either mastered or conserved. Masculinity is traditionally associated with the task of subduing the land. Codi's narrative does not condemn the men of Grace to the historical pattern. Even the mining company polluting the river does not so much represent maleness as it does capitalism. Helping to decorate the town's graveyard on All Souls' Day, Codi notes that the Grace community divides their time equally "between the maternal and paternal lines" (AD 162).

Ecofeminists claim that the ideology that sanctions the oppression of nature is the same as that which authorizes oppression based on race, class and gender. In exploring gender difference in relation to nature, *Prodigal Summer* exposes the dichotomy of nature vs. civilization, recognising the origins of this duality and exploring its historical usefulness in explaining human/nature relationships.

A conceptual framework is a socially constructed set of basic belief, values, attitude and assumptions that shape and reflect how a person uses him / her and others. It is oppressive and it justifies and maintains relationships of domination and subordination. An oppressive conceptual framework is patriarchal when it explains, justifies and maintains the subordination of women by men. It is this oppressive and patriarchal conceptual framework which sanctions maintain and perpetuate the twin dominations of women and nature. Revealing and overcoming oppressive and patriarchal conceptual framework are evident in

these theories and practices regarding women and nature are important tasks of feminism, environmentalism and environmental ethics.

Kingsolver's characters and environments are represented according to the broad ecofeminist premise that women and nature are linked by their shared experiences of domination and that women should work to create a healthy environment. Women interact with the environment, and struggle to combat pollution in *Prodigal Summer* and *Animal Dreams*. In their resolve, they are contrasted with Kingsolver's white male characters who embody apathy or opposition.

*Prodigal Summer's* interwoven structure, emphasised by parallels within and across the narratives, compounds its thematic preoccupation with environmental interrelatedness and cyclical patterns in nature and human behaviour. This sense of interrelatedness is explored through the novel's female characters in the context of their Appalachian locale, and informed by ecofeminist ideas which equate the domination of nature with patriarchal control over women.

In *Animal Dreams* Both Loyd and Codi cast off their inheritance from their fathers with Loyd giving up cockfighting, despite the fact that his "old man didn't have one damn thing to give him but cockfighting" (AD 103), and Codi shrugging off her father's insistence that she is "an outsider not only by belief but by flesh and bone" (AD 291). This discarding of paternal legacies mirrors Kingsolver's larger symbolic rejection of patriarchal environmental domination in favour of a balanced gendered vision.

Another conceptual basis in sex-gender differences particularly in differentiated personality formation is consciousness. The claim is that female bodily experiences and biologically experiences differ with respect to nature than men. This difference is revealed in

a different consciousness in women than men. It is rooted conceptually in western masculine forms of experiencing the world, which are the value dualisms. These socio-psychological factors provide a conceptual link that is embedded in different structures and strategies, relating to nature regarding women and men. In *The Bean Trees* the Native American child, Turtle faces a hard situation of abuse. “The Indian child was a girl. A girl, poor thing. That fact had already burdened her short life with a kind of misery I could not imagine. I thought I know about every ugly thing that one person does to another, but I had never even thought about such things being done to a baby girl.” (TBT 31)

The violence against women is rape, which is forced upon the small child just because the child was a female. Nature is often described in feminine and sexual terms as nature is raped, mastered, conquered, controlled and mined. The child faced an ugly situation. The dominations over women, the girl child and nature are explained thus, just because it is a freely given nature and the child a girl, they are forced into oppression by the men.

Lou Ann is left alone by her husband Angel. She delivers a baby Dwayne Ray. Lou Ann’s experiences explain how women suffer physically and mentally in public showing the domination of male in public. Women are seen as limited and determined by their bodies and thereby excluded from playing an equal role in public and private life. She has an aversion for girl child for she thinks, “having a girl is like feeding the neighbour’s New Year pig-all your care goes into something that will end up with another family” (PIH 43). Lou Ann’s frustrations are expressed by seeing women folk suffer for generations. Kingsolver focuses how sometimes women give up their own race by thinking of the sufferings they undergo.

Lou Ann misses her husband at the time of pregnancy. Her feet are so swollen she cannot get her shoes off. She weeps. “She couldn’t bend over far enough to unbuckle the

straps, and Angel was not there to do it for her.” (PIH 42) This is an instance of another physical and mental agony that is being expressed through Ann, who suffers with no one near her to help. Eco-Feminism sees a connection between the exploitation and degradation of the natural world and the subordination and oppression of women. This is another kind of male-domination in short, the loneliness into which, the men force women by avoiding them, in spite of knowing their state of sufferings. Kingsolver has explained how the female is just used and neglected by men as nature is just used by man to be exploited. Maria Mies argues that just as women’s bodies and labour are colonized by a combination of capitalism and patriarchy, so is nature. Under capitalist patriarchy both women and nature function as exploited resources.

Historical connections locate the conceptual link between feminism and the environment in the metaphors and models of mechanistic science during the enlightenment and pre-enlightenment period. It claims that nature was conceived on an organic model as a benevolent female, a nurturing mother. After the scientific revolution nature was conceived as a mechanistic model or as a machine. On both models nature was female. The mechanization of food production and consumption, negatively affects both women and animals. *Prodigal Summer’s* Garnett Walker is vehemently opposed to his neighbor Nannie Rawley’s organic farming, despite the fact that his wife died of a cancer which may have been caused by pesticides. The claim is that the move from the organic to the mechanistic model conceptually permitted and ethically justified the exploitation of the earth (female). The challenge to feminists, environmentalists and environmental ethicists, is to overcome metaphors and models which feminize nature and naturalize women to the mutual damage of both nature and women.

*Animal Dreams* fictionalises elements of the female strikers' stories in  *Holding the Line* and showcases other crises that suit within Kingsolver's chosen responsibility of issues in a global context, such as the destruction of agricultural communities in Nicaragua, Native American reservation environments and local water supplies affected by mining pollution. Codi describes settlements "torn up when [fictional mining company] Black Mountain chased a vein of copper," and claims that "not even the graveyards were sacred" (AD 161).

Another connection between feminism, animal liberation, and environmentalism has been made by documenting the effects of environmental pollution and degradation on the lives of women and animals. Many writers note that toxic pesticides, chemical wastes, acid rain, radiation, and other pollutants take their first toll on women, women's reproductive systems, and children. These hazardous chemicals are often initially tested on laboratory animals to determine levels of toxicity, together with the enormous environmental costs of factory farming and meat eating, demonstrate the link between environmental degradation and the oppression of animals.

Empirical and experiential evidence linking feminism and the environment points out various health and risk factors caused by the presence of low-level radiation, pesticides, toxic and other pollutants. Factory farming, animal experimentation, hunting and meat eating are connected to patriarchal concepts and practices. Such empirical information are intended to document the very real, felt, lived connections between the domination of women and nature and to motivate the need for feminists critical analysis of environmental concerns.

In *Prodigal Summer*'s Nannie and Lusa refuse to use poisonous pesticides and Nannie provides a successful model from which Lusa gains mental support through the

older woman's positive influence on Garnett. Lusa's refusal to hurt the coyotes is similarly pleasant-sounding with Deanna's mission to keep them alive. These changes range from the harmful effects of hunting predators and reliance on pesticides to foreign attackers as assorted as the fast growing kudzu vine and the immigrant Mexican workers, that impact upon the local culture. Rachel Carson was a renowned advocate of environmental ethics. Her 1962 book *Silent Spring* challenges the practices of agricultural scientists and the government, and warns of the dangers of pesticide use, which are deemed responsible for the death of the eponymous character, Rachel Carson in *Prodigal Summer*.

Some eco-feminists bring out experiential connections which honour and celebrate important cultural and spiritual connections of women and indigenous peoples to the earth. In *Pigs in Heaven* Sugar shows Alice a couple of town landmarks, such as an ostrich farm owned by a rich man and Boma Mellowbug's house. Mr. Green, who owns the ostrich farm, hates Boma, mostly because she keeps bee hives on her roof. Sugar explains that they are "good bees if you love them, and Boma does." (PIH 263) Boma, the old lady of the Cherokee race used to "stand in the middle of the street and have a conversation with the oaks" (PIH 230) that shows the un-breakable bond of the nature with the female as well as the indigenous people. Griffin's work *Women and Nature: The Roaring inside her* which was published in 1978 says that, Women speak with nature. That She hears voices from under the earth. That wind blows in her ears and trees whisper to her. But for him this dialogue is over. He says he is not part of this world that he was set on this world as a stranger. He sets himself apart from woman and nature. (1)

Boma Mellowbug's tree becomes an important metaphor for the Cherokee life. Instead of devaluing Boma for not being self-sufficient the town celebrates her spirit by

turning her tree into a community landmark. Connecting feminism and the environment is one of the most important contributions to the creation of liberating, life-affirming and post-patriarchal world view and earth based spirituality and theology. Appreciating these connections and understanding the ‘Politics of women spirituality’ is considered as an important aspect of feminism, environmentalism and environmental ethics.

Historical, conceptual and empirical connections have claimed to link feminism and the environment and also have motivated the need for different feminist environmental epistemologists. Reason, rationality, knowledge and the nature are the emerging strategies for this link. Val Plumwood in her work published in 1993 *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* suggests that if one mistakenly interprets environmental philosophy as mainly concerned with ethics, one will neglect “a key aspect of the overall problem which is concerned with the definition of the human cells as separate from nature, the connection between this and the instrumental view of nature and broader political aspect of the critique of instrumentalism” (19).

Kingsolver links books into her narratives to illuminate her characters and the reasons for their relationships. The things that bond people together are embedded in her themes and narrative choices. In *Prodigal Summer*, Lusa’s book about moths offers shorthand for her education in biology and its description of moth love is a metaphor for her impulsive, primal love for Cole. This intertext emphasizes the ecological webs that attach people to each other.

Codi wants to teach the local children to “have a cultural memory” and to be “custodians of the earth” for future generations (AD 332), just as *Prodigal Summer*’s Deanna pledges to ensure that her child understands ecological interconnection. To compensate for



having no children of her own, Codi exhibits her investment in the future of the community through her work. She likens her job teaching the local children to being on her own “in the Garden of Eden,” where she is “expected to teach the entire living world to these kids” (*PS* 109). Codi’s knowledge of science, her righteous anger about pollution, and her personal mission to teach about birth control, represent her interpretation of home. In Kingsolver’s fiction, home is reliant upon the land, and environmental pollution signals the dangerous lack of knowledge or ability to think about the future. These concerns emerge as Codi rants at her biology class; “You kids think this pollution shit is not your problem, right? Somebody will clean up the mess. It’s not your fault. Well, your attitude stinks. . . People can forget, and forget, and forget, but the land has a memory” (*AD* 254-255). This focus on political and ecological awareness complements Codi’s biological instinct for survival.

Ecofeminist epistemology covers feminist epistemology’s concerns with ways that gender influences of the origins of awareness, the knower, and methods of analysis and explanation. In 1974, twenty-seven women of Reni in Northern India took simple but effective action to stop tree felling of indigenous forests. They threatened to hug the trees if the lumberjacks attempted to cut them down. The women’s protest, known as ‘the Chipko Movement’ (chipko in Hindi means to embrace or hug), saved 12,000 square kilometers of sensitive watershed. The Chipko movement also gave visibility to two main complaints of local people, commercial felling by contractors damages a wide variety of species of trees, and it replaces valuable, multispecies indigenous forests with monoculture plantations of teak and eucalyptus. This commercial felling also disproportionately harmed women by, increasing the amount of time women spent collecting firewood, reducing women’s abilities to maintain household economies that are dependent upon trees for food, fuel, fodder, and products for the

home and, decreasing opportunities for women to make income-generating wood products for sale at local markets.

The Chipko movement shows that often it is rural women such as the Chipko women, and not the outside Western-trained forester, who are the experts on how to practice indigenous forests for multiple purposes for example food, fuel, fodder for cattle, dyes, herbs, medicines, building materials, and household utensils. Similarly, in Sierra Leone a study by feminist foresters revealed that, on the average, local men could name only eight different uses of local species of trees, while local women could name thirty-two uses of the same species of trees. The epistemological claim is that women of Sierra Leone have ‘indigenous technical knowledge’ (ITK) about forest uses and production *that is based on* their daily, lived, gendered experiences in connection with forest use and management. Their knowledge is borne from their situated, gendered, concrete, daily experiences as women.

An ecofeminist epistemology also shows that a *gendered environmental* perspective is important to understanding epistemological methods of inquiry and forms of justification concerning women and nature. These activities are of the rural women in many parts of Africa and India who engage in collecting water, and wood on a daily basis. While women try to use natural resource in an effective way, male characters in the novels of Kingsolver do not understand the importance of nature as women does, instead they show their attitude of domination. Dellarobia in *Flight Behaviour*, wonders when Byron explains about diminishing coral reefs and dying insects and he expresses his sadness “What was the use of saving a world that has no soul left in it. Continents without butterflies and sea without coral reefs” (FB 438). These lines highlight the people’s anthropocentric attitude towards nature.

Species extinction from the earth can drastically change the biodiversity of the ecosystem. Failing to understand the importance of these activities often make women invisible. This invisibility helps and explains that, Western foresters literally do not see trees that are used as windbreaks or living fence poles, but as trees that provide materials for basketry, dyes, medicines, or decorations, trees that provide sites for honey barrels, trees that provide fodder, trees that have religious significance, trees that provide shade or trees that provide human food.

Taylor in *The Bean Trees* gets teary-eyed at the sight of the bird family. There is difference between men's and women's issues and sense of their responsibility to the environment. Lou Ann thinks that Angel, instead of being touched, would have wondered how many birds he could hit. "If that had been Angel, he would've given himself two points for everyone he could hit." (PIH 129). This is another place where Kingsolver explains that men are not much concerned for the lives of women or animals. Angel would just try to have fun hitting quails as hurting Lou Ann's emotions and hurting them, the female characters are concerned for their lives as they are associated with them emotionally. Angel is shown as a person who does not value nature, and also as who kills women's feelings without any consideration but just for their fun loving tendency.

The male characters in *Animal Dreams* are resigned to the mining companies' pollution of their orchards, believing that "the trees can die and we can just go somewhere else, and as long as we fry up the bacon for them in the same old pan...it would be home" (AD 179). It is the women who are left to coordinate the protest against environmental damage, because many foresters literally do not see the huge variety in the use of trees. They do not see the vast number of species that are useful and also that men and women

may have very different uses for the same tree or may use different trees for different purposes. When Western foresters literally do not see these activities, they also do not see different methods women have for using different trees for different purposes. They do not see gendered environmental knowledge that is based on what local women do and know best.

These examples and data challenge recognized conceptions of knowledge as objective and of the knower as impartial, detached, and gender-neutral. They also challenge traditional research methodologies by encouraging researchers to situate themselves and their research projects within specific historical, cultural, and economic contexts. They also illustrate that theory and practices are interdependent. Theory must fit the facts and the facts must inform the theory like the empirical.

Kingsolver links other books into her narratives to illuminate her characters and the reasons for their relationships. The things that attach people are embedded in her themes and narrative choices. In *Prodigal Summer*, Lusa's book about moths offers shorthand for her education in biology and its description of moth love is a metaphor for her impulsive, primal love for Cole. This inter-text emphasizes the ecological webs that attach people.

Many eco-feminists explore the symbolic association and devaluation of women and nature that appears in art, literature, religion and theology. This is the background of developing an eco-feminist literary theory. Some of them explore the potential of feminism for creating alternative languages through religious or spiritual symbols. The novels of Kingsolver, chronicles various natural symbols that represent the novel from the Eco-feminist perspective, and also reveals the sufferings of women and nature that are inter

connected. In *The Bean Trees* she has named the baby Turtle because of its firm grip like a mud turtle. Women, being named after the animal's name is also known as the symbolical connection of Eco-feminism, which means to naturizing women. "I took the broom out of her hands and chased the bird off its perch above the medicine cabinet. It swooped through the doorway into the kitchen, where it knocked against the window above the sink with an alarming crack, and fell back on the counter." (BT 225).

The encounter of bird, Turtle's exploitation of situation and the scene of rattle snake are linked to share the eco-feministic perspectives of symbolism. The bird bangs into the window and falls back on the counter. Mrs. Parsons thinks it is dead, but it gets back up, and eventually Taylor and Mrs. Parsons manage to get it out the door and 'into the terrible night (BT 61).' "The sparrow darted off the screen, made a loop back toward the hallway, then flew through the open screen door into the terrible night." (BT 226). In both the scenes the bird and the bird's eggs symbolize turtle who is already assaulted and was oppressed all these days of its effect on her. This is another such same incident of the male-domination and exploitation over the small Cherokee girl expressed by Kingsolver with the symbols that prove again that this in an eco-feministic novel explained in symbolical connections of the patriarchal society.

Symbols in *The Bean Trees* enrich the themes found in the novel and often, suggests Kingsolver's extensive background in biology. Birds are metaphorically associated with Turtle and the abandoned child with strong survival instincts. As turtle's life changes so does the birds that symbolize her. Kingsolver repeatedly employs birds, plants and animals, representing the sufferings of female, which focuses on the symbolical connections of Eco-feminism. Women are described in pejorative animal terms: women are dogs, cats, catty,

pussycats, pets, bunnies, cows, foxes, chicks, bitches, beavers, serpents etc., Animalizing women in a patriarchal culture where animals are seen as inferior to humans thereby reinforces and authorizes women's inferior status.

Kingsolver uses coyotes as symbols of her characters' instinct for survival and ecologically sound 'ground orientation' in both *Animal Dreams* and *Prodigal Summer*. Coyotes represent the ability to carry home within themselves, rather than in possessions. As Loyd suggests, "We're like coyotes...Get to a good place, turn around three times in the grass, and you're home. Once you know how, you can always do that, no matter what. You won't forget" (AD 235). For Loyd, as for Kingsolver's coyotes, the ability to make a home overrides the idea that there may be a single place where home exists. In Loyd's words, "The important thing isn't the house. It's the ability to make it. You carry that...wherever you go" (AD 235), as he explains why he believes women are so central to Pueblo communities. In the novel *Flight Behaviour* Dellarobia Turnbow's, accidental encounter with the million misguided monarch butterflies set her in a flight to freedom. She faces a hard life staying in the sheep farm looking after the children and the household. Her state of life is symbolically presented before her through the shifted monarch butterflies. As the butterflies take flight at the end of the novel, she also chooses her way of life.

The symbolic connections between sexist and naturalist language renders women and nature, inferior and establishes connections between the languages used for women, nature and nuclear weaponry. Women are often described in animal terms such as cows, foxes, chicks, serpents, bitches, beavers, old bats, pussy cats, cats, bird brains, hare brains. Nature is often described in female and sexual terms such as nature is raped,

mastered, conquered, controlled and mined. Her secrets are penetrated and her womb is put into the services of the 'man of science'. Virgin timber is felled, cut down. Fertile soil is tilled and land that lies uncultivated is 'barren', useless, like a woman unable to conceive a child. The claim is that language which feminizes nature and naturalizes women describes, reflects, and perpetuates the domination and inferiorization of both by not-noticing the extent of this twin domination of women and nature.

Language that feminizes nature in a patriarchal culture, where women are viewed as subordinate and inferior, reinforces and authorizes the domination of nature. The exploitation of nature and animals is justified by feminizing them; the exploitation of women is justified by naturalizing or animalizing them. This reflects the unjustified patriarchal domination by failing to see the extent of the dominations of women and nature. Images of women and non-human nature, then raises larger issues about symbolic patterns linking women and nature. Symbolical patterns are explored in literature and culture. Barbara Kingsolver's *The Poisonwood Bible* focuses only on the moral aspects of the current shape of the narrative ethics, and the remaining five chapters formally explicate *The Poisonwood Bible* as narrative technology.

The ecological feminist's Philosophical literature on feminism and the environment is linked with ethics. The claim is that the interconnections among the conceptualization and the treatment of women, animals and the rest of nature require a feminist ethical analysis and response. The aim of feminist environmental ethics is to develop theories and practices concerning humans and the natural environment that are not male-biased and that provide a guide to action in the pre-feminist present. Ethical concern is closely connected with theoretical connections between feminism and the

environment, the range of theoretical positions. Kingsolver creates politically- and ethically-compatible communities in her novels.

Codi in *Animal Dreams* preaches to her students about the natural resource of pumice that is exploited to stonewash their fashionable jeans, reminding the novel's characters that even the perpetually contemporary pursuit of fashion is reliant upon the environment. "Above your peers" (AD 259), Doctor Homer makes Grace sound "like a language I didn't speak" (AD 12). "Being like no one else, being alone, was the central ethic of his life" and he tries to make it theirs (AD 69), emphasising that they "differed from [their] peers: in ambition, native ability, even physical constitution" (AD 46). He even tells his daughters that "everyone in Grace was somehow related except us Nolines" (AD 71), when in reality they are surrounded by family. In her search for 'ground orientation,' Codi finally strikes out against such a denial of community, and stakes a claim for her local environment. Kingsolver's emphasis on the etymology of names creates further layers of characterization and family links. Hallie's real name, Halimeda, means "thinking of the sea" (AD 13), and it is predictable that she is a character who makes "you look for things beyond what you could see" (AD 13). Hallie is the fictional embodiment of a moralistic author encouraging people to look, read, and think beyond the literal, political, environmental, and the universal way of thinking. The etymology of names, particularly surnames, in the novel is not only shorthand for individual characteristics, but also for exploring family belonging. Codi believes that her surname secures her the teaching job, claiming that "Nothing else I put down in my wobbly writing on that application could have impressed anyone too much" (AD 55).



The idea of the Noline name as a claim to competence and authority is disrupted by the revelation that Codi's father Homer changed his surname. Kingsolver's narrator describes Homer's realization that "His name is gone. He understands that this is his own fault. He took a pen to paper and changed it, cancelled his ancestors" (AD 137). Homer changed his name to Noline to escape his family and it is expected that Codi is unsure about the Noline name.

In representing Codi's search for self, and to choose a multigenerational longing for identity in the face of shifting social patterns, Kingsolver highlights a social dislocation resulting from loss of language, tradition and land-based identity. The Grace community faces the prospect of the loss of its water source and of ancient family fruit trees as a result of pollution from the old mine, as well as shifting employment patterns following the mine's closure and the way of life imposed by rail workers' timetables. In addition to these interrelated environmental and economic factors, the cultural impact of a universalizing "American" identity upon such a culturally mixed and distinctive ethnic community is also explored.

Ecofeminist philosophical ethics is the sub-field of ecofeminist philosophy. Ecofeminist ethics is a kind of feminist ethics and it involves a double commitment to analyse the male bias in ethics, and also develops ethics that are not male-biased. Feminist ethic also involves in articulation of values often lost or underplayed in mainstream Western ethics.

There are many definitions of ecofeminist ethics. One theme is that ecofeminist ethics is a critique and elimination of time-honored, culture versus nature dualism. Plumwood argues that a rejection of the culture-nature dualism has implications for an

ecofeminist conception of the self. Humans are both individual selves that are distinct from nature and ecological selves that are continuous with nature. Ecofeminists take characters to be fundamentally interactive, and deeply social, historical, and ecological, without losing ethical and political significance of individual experience, intentions and choices.

The ecofeminist ethics is located in different historical and cultural circumstances. This contrasts with a view of ethical theory and discourse as imposed on situations as a derivation from some preset rule or principle. The contextual inclusivity of ecofeminist ethics involves a shift in ethics from ethical rules, principles, rights, and duties to a pluralist focus on a variety of values, rules, and principles in ethics, ethical decision-making, and ethical conduct. These themes provide a general characterization of ecofeminist ethics. These three kinds of positions in ecofeminist ethics are care-focused ethics, environmental virtue ethics, and environmental justice ethics. The most broadly protected position is the ecofeminist ethics that are care-focused ethics.

The varieties of alleged connections between feminism and the environment have generated different sometimes competing, theoretical philosophical positions in all areas of feminist and environmental scholarship. Contemporary environmental ethics reflects the range of positions in contemporary normative philosophical ethics. There are also non-traditional approaches. Eco feminist and eco feminist philosophers who addressed environmental issues can be found defending each of these sorts of positions. The nature of eco feminist ethics is still emerging. Among the most visible are feminist animal rights positions and feminist environmental ethics based on an ethic of care, an ethic of respect, themes in social ecology and themes in bio regionalism. They also recognize important

connections between the indefensible treatments of women and of nature, and they involve a commitment to develop ethics not characterized by male bias.

Eco-feminist and other feminist concern for women and the environment have always grown out of pressing political and practical concerns. These range from issues of health concerning women and environmental health to development and technology, the treatment of animals, peace and anti-nuclear and anti-militarism activism. The varieties of feminist theoretical perspective on the environment are seen as an attempt to take seriously the grass roots activism and political concerns by developing analyses of domination.

Feminist political philosophy analyses ways in which traditional understandings of the political world, including the nature of the public sphere, freedom, democracy, political speech, unity, and participation, fail to adequately address feminist concerns. Ecofeminist political philosophy tends to expand these analyses to include ecologically informed visions for conceptualizing politics, political analyses, and the nature of democracy.

Barbara Kingsolver proclaims that art 'should be political' and that 'literature should inform as well as enlighten', she also explores her ways as an environmentalist, liberal, communitarian, feminist and agrarian. Kingsolver's first novel, *The Bean Trees*, engages with political issues from Native American adoption and US foreign policy in South America, to the nation's low-waged underclass. In this novel, protagonist Taylor Greer is placed in situations which challenge her liberal and patriotic sense of American identity. Greer is a typical Kingsolverian character, embodying a broader political conflict through its effects on her personal life. Typically, Kingsolver's fictions tell stories of rural American women struggling against environmental, political and personal injustice.

In *Animal Dreams*, she presents Codi's memories of burying her child in the banks of the creek are combined with the traumatic memory of being trapped by a flood while trying to save coyote puppies with Hallie. Codi's emerging sense of the influence of her past on her present identity is summarized in her proclamation that memory "is a complicated thing, a relative to truth but not its twin" (AD 48). She translates this emerging relationship with her memories of Grace into political action designed to reveal the truth of the river's pollution, politicizing her biology class and inspiring the women of the Stitch and Bitch club to protest.

During the 1980s, women's activism in a variety of social movements like the environmental, peace, animal liberation, and environmental justice movements came together and a new form of activism emerged, *ecofeminist* political activism. By the 1990s, this political activism had given rise to a diversity of ecofeminism such as liberal, Marxist, socialist, radical, cultural/spiritual, and social ecofeminism. These different ecofeminism are mentioned in different ecofeminist political perspectives like liberalism, Marxism, socialism, radical feminism, indigenous and spiritual politics, anarchism, and social ecology. And each political perspective provides different points about the nature of ecofeminist activism, green politics, and ecofeminist political philosophy.

Ariel Salleh, an Australian sociologist in her book *Ecofemism as politics* published in 1997, claims that the basic premise of ecofeminist political analysis is that the ecological crisis is the unavoidable effect of a Eurocentric capitalist patriarchal culture built on the domination of nature, and domination of Woman as nature. The environmental crisis is a crisis of citizenship and of traditional democracy. Men live in both cultural and ecological communities within familiar, enduring, socially diverse relationships to people and

places, culture and nature. Ecological communities are democratic when they are committed to integration culture with nature in ways suitable to substitute the health of all humans and the planet.

Kingsolver's protagonists, exhibit a reliance on interrelatedness as a way to explore political issues through empathetic characters and romantic stories that in turn secure popular appeal. Her characters are predominantly female and are often related. For example, although seemingly unrelated at the beginning of the novel, the things that attach *Prodigal Summer's* Lusa, Deanna and Nannie are gradually revealed as family and environmental ties. Such tangled points of interrelatedness include the revelation that Deanna is Nannie's stepdaughter, Lusa shares an ecological mind set with Nannie, and Lusa has adopted Nannie's neighbour's grandchildren. Although Kingsolver's characters take personal decisions which lead them into very different situations, the same political "lesson" of interrelatedness is always learned, whether by children living in the colonial Congo, a teacher learning to herd goats in Appalachia, or a woman who decides to drive across America until her car breaks down. The recurring education of interrelatedness raise awareness of the author's chosen issues and that this is a result of the political strategy of Kingsolver's fiction to appeal to a broad readership through empathetic characters.

Kingsolver proclaims her political intentions through her characters and also explicitly pursues various political crusades, uncovering as they do industrial pollution (*Animal Dreams*), colonial oppression (*The Poisonwood Bible*), and the complexities of Native American adoption (*Pigs in Heaven*). Kingsolver's writing is a form of political activism in itself. Kingsolver's preoccupation with representing voices which are largely unheard in Society indicates her faith in the power of language to effect political change.

The Conceptual links suggest that philosophical conception of the self, knowledge and the 'knower', reason and rationality, objectivity and 'nature vs culture' which are the philosophical motions in ethics, epistemology, meta physics, philosophy of science, history of philosophy, political philosophy are in need to be reconceived. The value dualism that pervades the western philosophical tradition since the early Greeks and the historical sex-gendered association of women with emotion, body and nature are in need to be examined for male gender bias.

Historical and empirical links suggest that social scientific information on women and the environment is relevant to the theoretical undertakings in many areas of philosophy. In ethics, the information on women and nature raises issues of anthropocentric and androcentric bias. Anthropocentrism is the root of our social and environmental problems. Species extinction from the earth can drastically change the biodiversity of the ecosystem. In deep ecological principle richness and biodiversity are valuable in themselves and human have no right to reduce this diversity.

Ecofeminism, in contrast, views anthropocentrism as a symptom of a much deeper problem known as androcentrism. In epistemology information on the 'indigenous technical knowledge' of women who globally constitute the main agricultural production force raises issues about women 'epistemic privilege' about farming and forestry. Modern western conception of objectivity and nature as object are patriarchal ideologies of domination and control.

Eco-feminism is a critique of capitalist domination and exploitation. But in alliance with the feminist movements, eco- feminism picks out the patriarchal aspects of the existing social system as the main target of attack. In the words of Ariel Salleh, the

movement puts up fight against “the Eurocentric patriarchal capitalist exploitation of natural resources, of women and of indigenous people” (12-13). Salleh, an Australian sociologist in her book *Ecofemism as politics* published in 1997, claims that in a time of ecological crisis Eco feminists have become agents of history and nature and give voice to a subversive politics aware of its own situation and transitionally.

Though ecofeminism is in sympathy with the deep ecological appeal for a correct environmental ethics based on an understanding of the cosmos and man’s place in the wide network, the discourse is politically motivated. Its emphasis is on the emancipatory agenda of exposing the oppressive dimensions of patriarchy and liberating women as well as nature from the irrational excesses of patriarchal capitalist system. The women, especially women of indigenous communities exist in a creative reciprocity with nature. The Eurocentric imagery of Mother-Nature and the ancient Indian concept of Prakriti celebrated this relationship and women’s potency, as Salleh points out in her book *Ecofemism as politics* published in 1997. But the domination of the rationalist scientific cultural with the method Man-Women- Nature degrades the mutuality of women and nature and exalts masculine identity as separate from nature and therefore productive and progressive.

The historical dimension of this dichotomy: The ideology of progress which was so deeply entrenched in Enlightenment thought meant that the growth of a humane, rational and civilized society could also be seen as a struggle between the sexes, with men imposing their value systems on women in order to enable social progress. The nature/culture dichotomy thus has a historical dimension. Human history, the growth of culture through the domination of nature, was the increasing assertion of masculine ways over irrational, backward-looking women.

In spite of recognizing feminism as an ally in the battle against patriarchal domination, ecofeminists accuse the feminists of being in “complicity with the western androcentric colonization of the life world by instrumental reason”. They hold the Marxists guilty of endorsing the masculinity myth of technological production and in her opinion the global crisis is the outcome of a capitalist patriarchal system that treats both women and nature as resources.

Vandana Shiva is one of the most well-known Indian nuclear physicists who sacrificed her career for the cause of women and nature. She points out the magnitude of the destruction caused by the Western model of development and the imperialistic imposition of a world monoculture. A multitude of plant and animal species as well as human communities and cultures have been swept away by the universalization of the rationalist Western culture. In *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Development*, Shiva offers a model analysis of the impact of capitalist patriarchal culture on third world women everywhere.

The erosion of traditional land-use right by the introduction of cash crops hassled to the economic marginalization of women and the loss of their skills, leading to the feminization of poverty. A sustainable woman-nature metabolism was one of the healthy aspects of traditional life which has been undermined by the Invasion of technology. The knowledge, skills and expertise of indigenous women developed through centuries have been uprooted by the male-development policies which have disrupted the subsistence, use-value- based way of life practiced by women. All resources and labor get transformed into the commodity form, to be circulated through the market as a necessary condition, of the profit-driven commercial production and trade. As a result women who depend more



on these natural resources are weakened. A river is viewed as a resource to be dammed and put to technological use and its value as a common resource which meets one of the most basic needs of local communities is ignored.

As the main users and carriers of water, women are worst hit by the interruption of the supply. One of the most dangerous aspects of the male-development policy is the application of technologies conceived in laboratories without a proper study of the web of life on the ground. As explained through the novels, struggle for ecological stability becomes a struggle against reductionist science, colonization, patriarchy and capitalism which are all closely related.

Kingsolver's fiction engages strongly with ecofeminist principles. Kingsolver's characters and environments are represented according to the broad ecofeminist premise that women and nature are linked by their shared experiences of domination and that women should work to create a healthy environment. Women interact with the environment, and struggle to combat pollution in *Prodigal Summer* and *Animal Dreams*.

Kingsolver's novel is didactic in imagining the possibilities of the holistic interaction of humanity and the environment. Her didacticism is not limited, in informing about the challenges facing Appalachian farmers, but extends to a range of subjects, including patterns of coyote behaviour and the effects of pesticides on the ecosystem. Like Aaron Kramer, whose poem 'Prothalamium' prefaces the novel, Kingsolver adapts traditional forms to her own political and ecological ends. By drawing elements from traditional utopian and pastoral literature into a structural and thematic web of interrelatedness, and representing characters attached to one another through their shared

environment, *Prodigal Summer* posits new ways of interacting with the environment as underpinned by Kingsolver's long-held preoccupation with the human need to belong.

Kingsolver's novels helps to understand how issues of nature and women are interwoven, and it can give a new perspective on reading literature, Life, birth, and passion that are all prominent themes explored through female characters, the male characters who try to control them, and the children both literally and figuratively. There is an intrinsic relationship between the way in which the natural world and the one another are treated. All the novels of Kingsolver bring out the strong, resilient women living in an imperfect world in late twentieth-century America. They are the heroes of the novels who discover resources in every unexpected ways.

The forth-coming chapter attempts to elaborate on the Eco feministic views on Kingsolver's novels as how man fails to view the interconnections among nature. Also it focuses on how man plays the superior role over the influence of culture, how women are looked symbolically connected with nature. It also discusses how women though they are directly connected to nature biologically, yet they are seen as opponents to culture or men. The next chapter attempts to elaborate on the connections between Nature, Culture, Man and Women.