



SPIRITUAL ECOFEMINISM: TOWARDS DEEMPHASIZING CHRISTIAN PATRIARCHY

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Abstract

Social ecofeminists view women's preference for spiritual ecofeminism as a kind of mythical means to escape social and environmental concerns. The paradigm of spiritual ecofeminism is hinged on the fact that it promotes goddess worship, regards women and environment as sacred beliefs, and alternating politics with religions, and condemning patriarchal religions. This paper is a theoretical exploration and appraisal of spiritual ecofeminism and using it as a paradigm to criticize Christian patriarchy. To attain the aim of the paper, a historical critical review method of related literature was adopted. It argued that Christianity is a patriarchal religion and emphasized spirituality as a critical tool in social transformation that promotes communication, solidarity, equality, cooperation, and consensus in human society.

Keywords: *Christianity, Patriarchy, Spiritual-Ecofeminism*

Introduction

Unlike ecofeminism, Christian patriarchy does not categorically classify women as originally ecological, and so does not relate women to nature and other classes in the same way like their male folk. This viewpoint tends to confine women to their own selves, thus, reducing womanhood to mere hospitality and empathy without necessarily liberating them from the negative aspects of humanity. By tying women to a biological destiny, this has the potential to stifle their ability to be liberated. Though social-feminism seeks to abolish the social barriers that divide men and women, it has generally ignored the link between humans and non-humans. On the other hand, transformative feminists realize that men's oppression of women is unavoidable.



In today's culture, the required reforms suggested by social-feminists appear to be too difficult for ordinary humans; hence, most individuals do not wish to modify their lifestyles drastically, especially in the ways that socialist-feminists advocate, therefore making their prescriptions unachievable.

Christianity is viewed as patriarchal religion by spiritual ecofeminists. As a result, they fiercely condemn patriarchal faiths while emphasizing Goddess and Mother Earth devotion. The sacred bond between women and nature is illuminated by this spiritual ecofeminist viewpoint. Deliberations on spirituality are highly contentious in today's society and among religions, resulting in a clash between liberal, social, and cultural ecofeminism. Spirituality is necessary for historical, ethical, epistemological, methodological, conceptual, and theoretical reasons, according to cultural ecofeminism and earth based spiritualities. The fundamentals of spiritual ecofeminism are presented in this paper, which examines the connectivity between women and nature in the light of patriarchal Christianity. While de-emphasizing Christian patriarchy, the paper proposes a new model of Christian community based on spirituality, communication, solidarity, equality, cooperation, and consensus. The paper emphasizes spirituality as a critical role in personal and social transformation. Therefore, in this article, spiritual ecofeminism serves as a critique of Christian patriarchy.

Concept of Patriarchy

The term "patriarchy" is from the Greek "*patriarkhs*" (father or chief of a race) and literally means father's rule (Slight, 2005). Patriarchy is used to describe authoritarian rule by a family's male head; however, since the late twentieth century, it was used to describe social institutions in which adult men hold the majority of authority (Keith, 2017). Patriarchy was popularized by some writers affiliated with second-wave feminism, such as Kate Millett, who wanted to use an understanding of women's history in their works (Mies, 2014). To free women from male dominance, patriarchal social connections were formed. This idea of patriarchy was constructed to explain male dominance as a social, rather than a biological, reality.

Furthermore, patriarchy is a hypothetical social structure whereby a father or a male elder exercise total control over a family group, and one or more males have ultimate control over the entire society. Many 19th-century researchers attempted to formulate a theory of unilinear cultural evolution based on Charles Darwin's biological evolution theories (Smith, 2004). This now-debunked theory proposed that human social order "evolved" in phases, with primitive



sexual promiscuity being followed by matriarchy, which was followed by patriarchy. Women who are constant victims of male violence have had to pay a price for speaking up and recognizing the problem in patriarchal society. They have had to be seen as weak women, who have failed to sensitize and civilize the nature in male in their feminine function.

Patriarchy is connected with a collection of views, a patriarchal ideology that aims to clarify and justify male domination by blaming it on innate male-female differences (Smiley, 2004). Whether patriarchy is a social product of fundamental gender distinctions is a point of contention among sociologists and liberation theologians. In practice, most modern societies are patriarchal. Most societies in the past were egalitarian, according to anthropological, archaeological, evolutionary and psychological evidences, and patriarchal social structures did not emerge until many years after the end of the Pleistocene epoch, accompanying social and technological advancements such as agriculture (Bourdieu, 2001). According to historical inquiry, no single "initiating event" has yet been discovered, according to Strozier (cited in Smiley, 2004). According to Lerner (1986), there was no single event that caused patriarchy to emerge as a social order in different places of the globe at different occasions. Some scholars date the conception of fatherhood to around 6,000 years ago, when the notion of fatherhood gained traction as a result of patriarchy's spread (Bourdieu, 2001).

The genesis of patriarchy, according to Marxist theory, is the formation of private ownership, which has traditionally been dominated by men, as expressed primarily by Friedrich Engels in his *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*. Men, according to this idea, controlled household production and sought to dominate women to assure the inheritance of family property to their own (male) descendants, while women were limited to home labour and childbearing. Lerner refutes this notion, claiming that patriarchy arose before the formation of a class-based society and the notion of private property. Women's dominance by men can also be traced back to 3100 BCE in the Ancient Near East, as can constraints on a woman's reproductive ability and exclusion from the process of representation (Pollert, 1996). For some scholars, the arrival of the Hebrews coincided with the exclusion of woman from the God-humanity covenant (Smith, 2004).

According to Taylor (in Acker, 1989), the enthronement of patriarchal dominance was linked to the rising of socially stratified hierarchical polities, institutionalized violence, and the divided individuated ego, all of which were linked to a period of climatic stress. Many feminists,



particularly academics and activists, have advocated for culture repositioning as a means of destroying patriarchy. Culture repositioning refers to a shift in culture. It entails the reconstruction of a society's cultural notion. Before the popular usage of the word “patriarchy”, foremost feminists referred to the phenomenon as male chauvinism and sexism (Keith, 2017). According to Hooks (2004), the new word symbolizes the ideology itself where the male assert dominance over the female, whereas in its earliest meaning it implies only males acting as female oppressors. On an analysis of patriarchy and its function in the development of feminist thought, Acker (1989) claims that seeing patriarchy as a worldwide, trans-historical, and trans-cultural event whereby the females were oppressed worldwide by their male folk in more or less the same manners suggest a biological essentialism. Patriarchy is described by Pollert (1996) as cyclical and combining description with explanation. She claims that patriarchy discourse leads to a theoretical stalemate thus, placing a structural label on what it is supposed to describe, limiting the ability to explain gender inequities.

Many sociologists, however, have criticized the assumption that patriarchy is natural, claiming that patriarchy emerged as a result of historical, rather than biological, circumstances. Men's stronger physical strength and women's common experience of pregnancy combined to preserve patriarchy in technologically basic societies (Peper, 2011). Technological advancements, particularly industrial machinery, gradually eroded the need of physical strength in everyday life. Contraception has given women control over their reproductive cycle in a similar way. Ecofeminism connects natural dominance and gender dominance, pointing out that patriarchy is at the root of both. Originally, the patriarchal idea was a phrase used in anthropology and sociology. A sociology dictionary defines patriarchy as the family arrangement in which men who have governed rights dominate all family members. Kate Millet, a radical feminist researcher, was the first to bring patriarchy into feminist theory. She defined patriarchy in *Sex Politics* as a dominance structure in which males dominate females and older males rule younger males throughout history (Millet cited in Sharnappa, 2016). In natural domination and gender dominance, patriarchy can take two forms: weak correlation and high correlation. Natural domination and gender dominance, according to the weak correlation, have their roots in patriarchy, that is, a civilization opposed to nature is also a civilization opposed to female (Shiva, 1990). For the strong association, patriarchy assigns the same attributes to nature and gender, then depreciates them in a systematic manner.



Patriarchy can be separated into two types: public patriarchy in public domains and private patriarchy in private domains, depending on the distinct fields in which it operates (namely parental patriarchy). The parental patriarchy is referred to as the original patriarchy (Turner, 2011). In a core family, the father has the right to dominate his children and the husband has the right to dominate his wife. Patriarchy is a social structure whereby the man dominates the female and is subsequently extended to all relationships. Female culture is tied to the body, blood and flesh, material, nature, emotion, and private fields in the patriarchal hierarchy, whereas male culture is focused on spirit, intelligence, sense, culture, and public fields. As a result, male can conquer female in the same way that nature may be conquered: “in reality, bring nature and all her progeny to you, let her serve you, be your servant” (Merchant, 1999 p.212). This is the modern-day scientism represented by Bacon (cited in Besthorn, F. & McMillen, 2002), which grants males the legal rights of natural dominance and gender dominance. The hierarchical masculine value system and the logical system of domination can be produced when subject and object, spirit and body, culture and nature are seen as two opposites, with the logic of domination being the most essential aspect of the hierarchical dualism’s framework.

According to Plumwood (2007 cited in Ress, 2010), the identification of female identity is linked to the rationalistic paradigm that is prevalent in Western philosophy. Rationality creates a difference which can define itself for the nature, exactly like the concept of husband defining wife, the notion of owner defining slave. In a broader sense, patriarchy is considered a subset of the philosophical dualism that has been widely distributed in Western philosophy (Pepper, 2011). The numerous kinds of dominance have similar logic or symbolic structures, and the current global ecological crisis and other types of dominance phenomena are unavoidably the result of patriarchy’s dominance (Chen, 2014).

Spiritualizing Nature

In this context, eco-feminists’ advocacy of spiritualizing the natural environment, including its living and non-living components, can be immensely beneficial in building an eco-theory that assesses an intrinsic worth to nature as a whole and brings such theory alive in people’s hearts and minds. As a result, developing appreciation for the environment as a complex of living collective bodies of interconnected life-forms make sense emotionally and practically (Jenkins, 2008). What is not obvious from a scientific standpoint can be assigned as a religious truth, if by truth it is meant an ideal coherence of humans’ beliefs with one other and with their



experiences, as those experiences are the source of those beliefs (Tweed, 2006). There appear to be four choices for finding a spirituality that might serve as a foundation for ecocentrism. Western religious tradition, such as Christianity, is the first option. The issue is that the current Western theological tradition, Christianity, is in many respects affiliated to rationalistic, divided mechanical, material worldview tendencies.

However, spiritual perspective is a separate vision or attitude that, as broad as it is, necessitates a clear departure from a worldview based primarily on reason, which necessitates immersion in the realm of the unknown for a period of time. Reason is built into the very existence of people as a superstructure and extension of the survival instinct, and a perspective of investigating the world without feeding it through the rational standpoint threatens the ego with dissociation, which is interpreted as total destruction of our identity (Provencher, 2013). The spirit of the original environmental concept as ecocentric cannot be compromised between a mechanistic or material and spiritual view. Even though it is more explicit in certain traditions than others, the spiritual perspective inherent in religious vision automatically allows that inclusion, because it reveals all existing entities in their wholeness, no matter how distinct, as creation, brought forth by a mutual parent, that is called “Divinity”.

It is obvious, a turn to spirituality in Western society has a decidedly intellectual component; it is aided by knowledge and understanding, given that intellect is at the very foundation of the Western mind. To have a meaningful personal religious experience, such as becoming Christians, one should first grasp why Christian religious forms of self-expression are important. Only such an event can prove the religious dogma’s reality, if by truth it is meant some kind of ideal coherence of humans’ ideas with one another and with their experiences as they are represented in their belief system (Tweed, 2006). For persons of Western mentality, however, delving into the depths of the immediate, intuitive realities of inner life is primarily achievable through grasping the rationale behind religious dogmas and/or rites and ritual practices. The need of perceiving religious dogmas’ knowledge or understanding as nothing more than triggers of deep inner personal experience as the sole means to assert their worth cannot be overstated.

An Overview of Ecofeminism

The basic content of ecofeminism is the interaction between nature and women. Ecofeminism believes that nature and women are inextricably linked (Miles, 2015).



Ecofeminism was formed and developed as a result of research into the interaction between women and nature. The theoretical foundation of ecofeminism research is the recognition and study of the interaction between nature and women. Ecofeminism, like feminism, is a broad term that encompasses a wide range of ideas and viewpoints, including Goddess worship, lesbian separatism, Christian ecofeminism, and socialist ecofeminism. This diversity is not a contradiction; it is at the heart of ecofeminism's theory and practice.

It is worth noting that in the dualism sets, both woman and nature fall on the same side; defined as anything that is not man or human. Women and nature are viewed as 'others' in society, and are legitimately treated as such. Because these types of dominance, as well as all others that follow this pattern, are tied by the same conceptual logic - each one should be addressed before the others can be addressed. As a result, environmental concerns cannot be addressed without addressing patriarchy, and vice versa. Ecofeminism serves as a critique of dominant social movements in this way. Ecofeminism emphasizes on dismantling these dualisms in order to (re)create a society based on reciprocity and mutuality that is free of hierarchy and dominance (Gaard, 2002). As a result, all systems of dominance, such as racism, classism, and heterosexism, must be eliminated, as they all derive from the same logic of dominance.

Ecofeminism is a subset of feminism that studies women's relationships with nature. In 1974, Françoise d'Eaubonne invented the term (Cornejo-Valle & Blázquez-Rodríguez, 2013). The essential feminist ideas of gender equality, a revaluing of non-patriarchal structures, and a worldview that respects organic processes, holistic connections, and the virtues of intuition are all used in ecofeminism. Ecofeminism adds a devotion to the environment as well as an understanding of the connections created between women and nature to these ideas. Specifically, this worldview emphasizes patriarchal society's treatment of both nature and women. Ecofeminists investigate the effects of gender classifications to show how social conventions oppress women and nature. The concept also claims that those rules contribute to an incomplete perspective of the universe, and its proponents argue for another worldview that views nature as sacred, acknowledges humanity's reliance on nature, and sees all life as worthwhile.

During the late 1970s and early 1980s, a coalition of academic and professional women hosted a series of conferences and workshops in the United States, which sparked the current ecofeminist movement (Arivia, 2017). They got together to talk about how feminism and ecology could be merged to promote respect for females and the nature, with the idea that a long



history of connecting women with nature had led to oppression of both. Women and nature were commonly described as chaotic, illogical, and in need of control, but males were frequently portrayed as rational, orderly, and thus capable of managing the use and advancement of women and the natural world. Ecofeminists argue that this system creates a hierarchical framework that gives men control while allowing for the exploitation of women and nature, particularly when the two are linked. As a result, early ecofeminists concluded that resolving the plight of either constituency would necessitate dismantling both constituencies' social status. Ecofeminism's early work mostly consisted on identifying historical ties between women and nature, thus, seeking for avenues to break those relationships. Theologian Rosemary Ruether, one of the founders of ecofeminism, believed that all women should realize and struggle to eliminate nature's dominance if they are to strive toward their own emancipation (Ruether, 2005).

She appealed to women and environmentalists to join together to abolish patriarchal institutions that favor hierarchy, control, and uneven socioeconomic relationships. Feminist scholars and activists took up Ruether's challenge, criticizing not only ecological theories that ignored the impact of patriarchal structures, but also feminist ideas that ignored the relationship between women and environment. Ecofeminism had moved out of its mostly academic context by the late 1980s and had become a popular movement. Ynestra King, a feminist theorist, is often credited with popularizing the term. In 1987, King published an article in *The Nation* titled "What Is Ecofeminism?". She asked all Americans to think about how their religious beliefs allow for the exploitation of the earth and the continued subjugation of women. The concept of ecofeminism gained in popularity and intellectual scope as a result of King's article.

Spiritual Ecofeminism

Another type of ecofeminism is spiritual ecofeminism, which is popular among ecofeminist authors like Starhawk, Riane Eisler, and Carol J. Adams. This is what Starhawk (1990) refers to as "earth-based spirituality," which acknowledges that the Earth is alive and that humans are all part of a larger community (p.267). Spiritual ecofeminism is not affiliated with any one religion, but it is based on values of compassion, caring, and nonviolence. More ancient traditions, such as the worship of Gaia, the Goddess of Nature and Spirituality, are frequently mentioned by ecofeminists (also known as Mother Earth). Spiritual ecofeminism is influenced by Wicca and Paganism in particular (Stark, 2007). Most Wicca covens have a strong focus on community values, a great reverence for nature, and a feminine attitude (Spretnak, 1990).



Spiritual ecofeminism, Social or Social constructionist ecofeminism, and Socialist or Transformative-socialist ecofeminism are the three branches of Ecofeminism described in Tong's *Feminist Thought* (2002). Spiritual ecofeminists believe there is a link between the Judeo-Christian idea that God gave people sovereignty over the globe and the destruction of the planet's ecosystems.

Women are intrinsically tied to nature, according to the main principles of ecofeminism, and hence debasement of the planet is seen to be identical with debasement of women. Judaism and Christianity justify the oppression of women by tolerating and even encouraging the servitude of the planet. If Judaism and Christianity cannot be emancipated from the concept of a disembodied, male God, spiritual-ecofeminists advocate for both the abandoning of these religions and the practice of earth-based spiritualities, which celebrate nature (Ottuh, 2020). The immanence of the Goddess in the living world, connectivity of mind, body, and nature, and a compassionate life-style are the three most significant concepts of earth-based spiritualities, according to Starhawk, a renowned Spiritual Ecofeminist (Starhawk, 1990). Spiritual-ecofeminists have been chastised for attempting to substitute politics with religion and, as a result, engaged in spiritual activity rather than serious thinking about how to change the world's status.

Spiritual ecofeminism opposes Christian anthropocentrism, which is based on the white masculine idea of One God, the Lord. Instead, it revives old matriarchal beliefs and cults of the Goddess Mother as a symbol of fertility, as well as animistic beliefs in Ghosts or Spirits, and incorporates parts of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Christianity. This type of ecofeminism rejects the anthropocentric/androcentric view of the universe and proposes an ecocentric vision of the world as a circle - the symbol of perpetual return - as well as a holistic view of love as a strength that would aid in the resolution of the ecological problem (Stoddart & Tindall, 2011). In terms of interdisciplinarity, a human ecological approach can be found in the field of religion and ecology. Naes (cited in Stoddart & Tindall, 2011), with her deep ecology theory emphasizing the supremacy of the natural world over human prerogatives, and Clarence Glacken, with his study of nature in Western culture, are two notable philosophers. With their theoretical and involved perspectives, theologians like Jhon Cobb and Gordon Kauffman provide ways for Christian values to be more effectively expressed theologically and via environmental action; ecofeminists like Rosemary Ruether and Sallie Mc.



Ecojustice writers, including Fague and Heather Eaton, who demonstrated the contentious character of the treatment of the Earth and the exploitation of women; and Fague and Heather Eaton, who demonstrated the contentious nature of the treatment of the Earth and the exploitation of women. Some of the most influential authors in the field of religion and ecology include Robert Bullard, Dieter Hessel, and Roger Gottlieb, who have all made significant contributions to understanding the connections between social injustice and environmental issues. Starhawk (1990), contends that Earth-based spirituality is anchored in three core notions she calls immanence, interconnectedness, and community, has some of the most significant ideas concerning ecofeminism, politics, and spirituality. The concept of immanence suggests that the earth is dynamic and alive, and that the sacred is the world, which includes humans.

Despite all of these assumptions, not everyone agrees on spiritual ecofeminism, particularly when it comes to deep ecology. Male deep ecologists should counsel women who are more in tune with the natural world than men, according to Zimmerman's (cited in Warren, 2000) feminist, deep ecology, and environmental ethics. Women are perceived as being closer to nature as a result of the historical process, whilst men are perceived as being more active in the cultural world. The suppressed feminine, nurturant part of our culture can be woven into all social structures and activities, but feminism has never been about a value transvaluation. The mirror image of patriarchy, feminism, is a catalyst in the ongoing development of human self-consciousness. Feminism as a whole does not aspire to be a blueprint for some pristine matriarchal tyranny - it is a catalyst in the ongoing growth of human self-consciousness.

Ecofeminists are now waiting for males to take the next step in their emancipation from patriarchy, so that they might, as it were, negotiate a fair and human contract with nature. From the beginning of recorded history, patriarchal culture has been associated with a repressive agenda that has regarded women and colored peoples as resources, as well as an ideology that plunders nature (Spretnak, 1990). Spiritual ecofeminism is inextricably linked to archaeology's ancient matriarchal civilization (Ottuh, 2020). God and its religion, according to spiritual ecofeminism, are patriarchal religions. Spiritual ecofeminists believe it is vital to resurrect old religions and encourage goddess worship, as well as see women and nature as sacred religious beliefs.

Spiritual ecofeminists also believed that religions should replace politics. Spiritual ecofeminism arose as a result of archaeology's finding of an ancient matriarchal civilization.



Spiritual Ecofeminism believes that God and its religion are patriarchal religions, based on a comparison of matriarchal and patriarchal cultures (Ruether, 1979). They support the goddess psychomotor to re-establish the bond between women and nature, and they advocate for the resurrection of traditional religions. Spiritual ecofeminism promotes goddess worship, regards women and environment as sacred religious beliefs, and replaces politics with religions, in addition to condemning patriarchal faiths (Sydee & Beder, 2001). Social Ecofeminism slammed this viewpoint, claiming that women worship for Spiritual Ecofeminists is a kind of mythical means to escape social and environmental concerns.

Patriarchal Tendencies in Christianity

Christian patriarchy also called biblical patriarchy is a set of ideas held by Reformed Evangelical Protestant Christians about gender relations and how they present themselves in institutions such as marriage, the family, and the home. It sees the father as the head of the household, in charge of his family's behaviour. According to some scholars, all worship was of the goddess before to the development of Christianity, Islam, and Judaism (Ruether, 2005). Others imagine a time when both male and female gods were equally revered. Scholars on both sides claim that the rise of patriarchy in religion has made goddess worship either terrifying to men in power or resulted in a new type of goddess worship, such as the cult of the Virgin Mary (Swidler, 1979). In the late twentieth century, there was a growth in goddess worship that coincided with the development of feminism (Tucker, 2006). The goddess is being elevated in Christianity as a contrast to traditional Christian theology and terminology's patriarchy. Christian patriarchy promotes views such as:

- i. God shows Himself as masculine, not feminine.
- ii. God instituted different gender roles for male and female as part of the creation.
- iii. A husband and father are the head, provider, and protector of his family.
- iv. Male leadership in the household extends to the church: only men are allowed to hold positions of authority in the church. In civic and other domains, a God-honoring society will also prefer male leadership.
- v. Because a woman was designed to be a helper to her husband, a mother, and a keeper at home, the household and all related to it is the God-ordained and rightful sphere of rule for a wife.
- vi. God's word to procreate and multiply applies to married couples as well.



Christian parents provide a truly Christian education for their children - one that teaches the Bible and a biblical vision of God and the world (Turner, 2011). The biblical patriarchy movement, according to Evans (cited in Beavis, 2015), is “dedicated to preserving as much of the patriarchal structure of Old Testament law as feasible” (p.64). The contrasts between biblical patriarchy and complementarianism are mostly ones of degree and emphasis. While complementarianism believes that only men should lead in the church and at home, biblical patriarchy extends that exclusion to the civic realm, stating that women should not be civil leaders or have jobs outside the house (Besthorn & McMillen, 2002). As a result, Einwechter (cited in Cornejo-Valle & Blázquez-Rodríguez, 2013) refers to traditional complementarianism as “two-point complementarianism” (male leadership in the home and church), while biblical patriarchy is referred to as ‘three-point’ or “complete” complementarianism (male leadership in family, church, and society).

During Sarah Palin’s 2008 vice presidential campaign, some Christian patriarchy advocates claimed that Palin was biblically ineligible to run for vice president because she was a woman (Eisler, 1990). It is believed that both the patriarch and the complementarian recognize that spouses are expected to lead their homes (Sproul cited in Fry, 2000). Both believe that in God’s eyes, spouses and children are equals, and that the husband/power father’s is not the result of being a superior form of humanity. Both affirm that wives are called to assist their husbands in carrying out the dominion mandate. Wilson (cited in Oksala, 2018), on the other hand, does not believe it is a sin for a woman to seek for public office. The complementarians, John Piper and Wayne Grudem, claim that they are not as convinced in this broader domain which roles can be carried out by males or women (Miles, 2015). While power is often preferentially conferred on one sex or the other, current anthropologists and sociologists agree that patriarchy is not the cultural universal it was formerly assumed to be. Some scholars, on the other hand, continue to use the term in a broad meaning for descriptive, analytical, and instructional reasons.

The Christian tradition’s purported restriction to just human-God relationships, resulting in a spirituality that omits physicality, the earth, and nature with all of its non-spiritual, non-human animals. This idea in Christianity eventually leads to the issue of the Judeo-Christian God’s transcendence (Shiva, 1990). Due to the deep interconnectedness with the two primary themes on the philosophical, psychological, religious, and cultural levels, and being derivative from the tradition’s specific vision of the problem of “the self and the other,” the subject of



national/racial equality and ethical consideration toward afflicted and children are three other recurrent themes in this subject area.

Lesson from Hinduism

Tantric tradition profoundly influenced Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism when the Gupta era ended in the 6th century. If intellectual or elite Hinduism is Vedic in nature, then mass Hinduism is Tantric. Accordingly, both traditions are equally revelatory. In terms of religious rituals, Tantric literature essentially eliminates caste divisions. It also has a great esteem for women. As a result, it serves as a valuable counterbalance to unfavorable preconceptions of Hinduism as patriarchal (male-controlled) (Sydee & Beder, 2001). While smriti literature is primarily male-oriented, Tantric literature is predominantly female-oriented (Van der Veer, 2009). Take a look at the following quotes from Tantric literature. Tantra is open to women and people of all castes, according to the Gautamya Tantra. A man must fast for a day if he speaks cruelly to a woman, according to the Mahanirvana Tantra. According to the Kubjikmata Tantra, all women's homes should be revered as holy temples (Warren, 2015). All women are recognized as gurus in the Shakta form of Hinduism, which emphasizes worship on the Great Goddess, and may initiate others by reading aloud the mantra from an approved scripture. Men do not have the power to do so. Furthermore, rather than being worshiped in conjunction with a male god, the Devi (goddess) is venerated in her own right.

Hindu gods are frequently shown alongside female equivalents. When they are invoked together, as in Shiva and Parvati, the female partner is named first (Geiger, 2002). Shiva and Shakti have such a strong bond that they are shown as sharing a single body in the Ardhanarishvara (Lord-who-is-half-female) form. Tantra sometimes includes harmonizing these two aspects - Shiva (representing consciousness) and Shakti (representing energy) in a way that is similar to Daoism's yin and yang.

Towards a Non-Patriarchal and Inclusive Christianity

Christian or biblical patriarchy has been chastised for espousing attitudes that denigrate women and regard them as property. The Vision Forum statement, according to Don and Joy Veinot of Midwest Christian Outreach, implies that "women truly cannot be trusted as decision makers" and that "until a daughter marries, she practically remains pretty much the 'property' of the father until he dies" (cited in Gimbutas, 1992 p.131). Andrew Sandlin challenges biblical patriarchy for teaching fathers' authority when the Bible teaches both fathers and mothers'



authority. Sandlin (cited in Houtman & Aupers, 2007) claims that the Bible never depicts a paternal hierarchy, only a parental hierarchy when it comes to children's obligations to their parents, that the father has no more say in the children's rearing than the mother, and that the Bible does not teach that the father is the head of the household. Sandlin also claims that renewed patriarchalism in some quarters is pushing for hegemony over the other lawful areas of God's authority in other places. In other words, the father's power in the church and society trumps all other power structures. Some patriarchalists, according to Sandlin, have gone so far as to suggest that Christian day schools are wicked or erosive of the family, and expect nearly unshakeable devotion and servanthood from their forty-year-old married sons.

Kunsman (cited in Joyce, 2010) presented a session on biblical patriarchy. She called it a "intolerant philosophy" that has emerged within Christian homeschooling circles during the previous two decades. She accused the biblical patriarchy movement of subordinationism, including the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, the Federal Vision movement, and the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary as biblical patriarchy supporters.

Kunsman was accused of making unwarranted and erroneous claims against Christian instructors and ministries, including the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood and agencies within the Southern Baptist Convention. According to ecofeminist philosophy, capitalism simply reflects paternalistic and patriarchal attitudes. This theory argues that capitalism's impacts have not helped women and have resulted in a negative gap between nature and culture. Early ecofeminists argued that the breach can only be mended by the feminine urge for nurture and holistic awareness of nature's processes in the 1970s (Lerner, 1986). Since then, various ecofeminist scholars have stressed the distinction that it is not because women are female or "feminine" that they relate to nature, but because of their identical situations of oppression by the same male-dominant forces.

The gendered terminology used to describe nature, such as "Mother earth" or "Mother nature," and the animalized vocabulary used to describe women, both reflect the marginalization (Plumwood, 2007). Because of their traditional social function as a nurturer and caregiver, certain discourses link women directly to the environment. These linkages, according to spiritual ecofeminists, are demonstrated by the consistency of socially labeled qualities associated with 'femininity,' such as nurturing, which are prevalent both among women and in nature. Alternatively, spiritual ecofeminist and activist Vandana Shiva claimed that women have a



unique relationship to the environment that has been overlooked via their daily encounters (Shiva, 1990). Women in subsistence economies who make wealth in conjunction with nature, according to Shiva (1990), have become experts in their own right of holistic and ecological knowledge of nature's processes. Shiva attributes this failure to patriarchal Western perceptions of development and progress. Patriarchy, for Shiva, has labeled women, nature, and other groups that are not contributing to the economy as unproductive. Similarly, in connection with green politics, ecosocialism, genetic engineering, and climate policy, Salleh (cited in Shiva, 1988) expands this materialist ecofeminist approach. This research proposes a formulation of Christian ecocentric ethics as a truly holistic, spiritualized environmental ethics based on such an understanding of the religious past. The theocentric-ecocentric ethics will be founded on the following principles:

- i. Reverence for the divine source of life as the archetypal source of love for the other, recognizing the numinous within all works of nature, including ourselves, humans, and loving the other as the self. Humans can play an active part in reversing the ecological disaster and creating conditions that will support life and well-being for all-natural creatures, including humans, by accepting personal responsibility for the devastation.
- ii. An environmentally sound management strategy that ensures the earth community's long-term health.
- iii. On the basis of inherent worth, equity amongst all members of the earth's community, human and nonhuman, living and 'non-living' nature, men and women.
- iv. Moral respect for humans and other animals, as well as non-living nature, based on love and understanding that we are all members of a diversified family in a brother/sisterhood relationship, in deep interconnectedness/intercommunion.
- v. Promotion of vegetarianism as a realistic strategy to stop violence and a way to change egocentrism's thinking toward animal sentiments awareness.
- vi. Cultural, religious, and biological variety are all respected. Women, children, minorities, and non-human nature are all included in the ethical accountability code.

The cultivation of equitable relationships is likewise incompatible with Christian sexism. The ecofeminist notion that we are all one holy body, complete with all of its intricacies and complexity, is incompatible with moralistic notions of good and evil, righteousness and sin



(Ress, 2010). Despite this, it is worth noting that there is a Divine Feminine tradition within Christian communities, combining Christianity and Goddess spirituality (Beavis, 2015). Ecofeminist spirituality is focused on the divine feminine and stems from both feminism and environmentalism. Nonetheless, an enduring debate exists among the many varieties of feminism about whether women's spirituality would not reinforce gender stereotypes and, as a result, undermine the political and philosophical goals of feminism. Two distinct currents of spiritual ecofeminism might be examined in this regard. First, there are the queer approximations, which transcend gender. Second, those associated with feminist of difference, in which women's spirituality and differences play an important role in their own empowerment (Jackso, Sherman & Gilmore, 2006). Spiritual ecofeminism plays a crucial role in both circumstances in challenging the patriarchal perspective and all of its beliefs. This spirituality is not founded on a single text, dogma, or revealed truth from a theological standpoint. It is not bound by any one tradition, but is nurtured by many; it also does not claim to be scientific, though it is occasionally founded on scientific facts. It isn't meant to be a mere intangible myth; rather, it is utilized to explain everyday existence.

A significant shift in consciousness, a recovery of more old and traditional beliefs that honor the profound connectedness of all beings in the web of existence and rethinking of the relation of both mankind and divinity in nature is required for conversion to spirituality. Ruether (2005) focuses on the early Christian male-female equality and describes the "new tale" as founded on the stewardship ethic (p.254). The teaching of the sages behind Genesis, as adapted by early Christianity, is one of stewardship over creation as God's image shared equally with women and men, according to Ruether (1979). Such a picture, on the other hand, is incompatible with the all-inclusive egalitarian ethics that one sees in early Christian thinking. Ruether demonstrates the critical importance of a woman's rights ethic and acknowledges the urgent need for an egalitarian shift in global human society, seeing the problems of discrimination against women, minorities, and poverty as inextricably intertwined. Philosophers who are not ecofeminists looked explored the concept of combining Christian heritage into ecological thought, but a holistic approach to Christian philosophy is beneficial in re-evaluating the religion's very foundations. Callicott (cited in Hay, 2002; Turner, 2011) investigates several modern conceptions of Christian religion and goes to John Muir, a deeply spiritual ecological thinker. Muir, a 19th-century naturalist and early conservationist, disputed the hierarchical,



anthropocentrist vision of Creation, seeing humans as equal and ordinary “members and citizens” of nature, as did Aldo Leopold, the pioneer of ecocentric environmental ethics (Leopold, 1968).

In *Goddess and the Divine Feminine: A Western Religious History* (2005), Ruether’s second book, aims to reappropriate Christian Goddess myths in quest of a pro-woman spirituality, where spirituality is formed as a rationally picked component from many Christian narratives based on its relevance for eco-feminist theories and practice, which she also sees as incredibly effective as a weapon against fundamentalist patriarchal spirituality. Such an approach to Christian storytelling is ideological; viewing Judeo-Christian tradition as a useful and convenient ideological risk and turning organic, living, breathing, ever-changing Christian tradition into “Christianism,” and another “ism” that can appeal to both pragmatics and zealots (Walker, 2004).

Both the obsession on feminine spirituality and the dependence on logical spiritual choice represent the divisive, hierarchical qualities of the Western mind, which Warren claims is imprinted in our most fundamental beliefs (Hay, 2002; Gaard, 2002). Particular caution should be exercised when ecofeminists incorporate religious tradition/spirituality as the foundation for environmental ethics. The criterion for such spirituality appears to be whether it is constructed on exclusionary principles, and whether it is capable of repairing the breach between the self and the other. The remedy to the anthropo/androcentric mentality’s division would be to include, rather than oppose, the male/rationality/transcendence compound: the masculine and, not or, the feminine. The hoped-for comprehensive and egalitarian spiritual ecocentric base would be found.

The fundamental source of arrogant anthropocentrist/androcentrist, individualist attitude, which is at the foundation of the harmful exploitation of nature, is frequently considered as Christian religious thinking and behavior (Ruether, 2005). As a result, recent proponents of ecology have pointed to Christianity as the creator of these degraded views of nature as the religious sanction for current mechanical plunder of the environment (Ruether, 1979). Despite the fact that Yahweh appears to be a masculine character in Genesis, operating seemingly alone in ensouling the world, other biblical scriptures portray Yahweh as a composite, androgynous Being (Swidler, 1979). Yahweh’s androgyny, as well as father and maternal imagery, are frequently lost in translation; however, modern research based on rigorous examination and translation of the Hebrew portions of the Old Testament indicate Yahweh’s androgyny and both



father and maternal imagery. Further study of the Bible reveals that the feminine half of God's totality can be understood as a hypostatized, personalized feminine figure, functioning in harmony but apart from God's masculine side, much like Eve was isolated from the androgyny of holistic humanity.

Conclusion

The research has shown so far, like Christian patriarchy, that social ecofeminists diminish the initial potency of ecofeminism as a movement to reclaim the land as an extension of women's biology by downplaying the ties between women and the world. Traditional feminine features are valuable in their own right, as are traditional male characteristics. Instead, being perceived as restrictive, these feminine traits should be embraced and utilized in society to make the world a more peaceful, nurturing place. All ecofeminists think that humans are linked to one another as well as the rest of the nonhuman world. Humans will continue to damage one another and damage the planet they live on unless they recognize these linkages more fully.

The spiritual view that can be established in the foundation of a comprehensive, all-inclusive environmental ethics can be incorporated in the Christian tradition. Spiritual ecofeminism has played a crucial part in the establishment of ecofeminism as a political movement at the grassroots level. Ecofeminist protests often spring from spiritual traditions and draw strength from them. The importance of rituals and symbols is a concern raised by ecofeminist spiritualities.

They also demonstrate principles such as compassion, nonviolence, love, and friendship. These are essential components of spiritual ecofeminist ethical theory and practice. Ecofeminist spiritualities also bring up significant questions regarding the relationship between women, people, and nature, which is at the heart of ecofeminism. They have aided in the revival of long-forgotten sacred tales and rituals that communicate feelings of ecological wisdom and completeness through art, music, and poetry. They transmit knowledge assertions that focus on situated knowledge, which should be essential to a philosophy. Hence, many women throughout cultures feel that spirituality is critical to their capacity to exist in oppressive natural environments.



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