



Ecofeminist Reading of Temsula Ao's Nature Poems

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Abstract: When discussing nature and its relationship to poetry, the Northeast immediately comes to mind. The natural world has had a significant impact on the writing that has come out of this specific part of India. The abundance of the land, its people, and their traditions all combine to produce writing that is acutely aware of its impact on the environment. The concept of a unique connection between humans and other forms of life is deeply ingrained in their cultural practises. They hold nature in the highest regard. In addition to this, the impending danger of modernization has inspired the poets and authors of the north east to speak out particularly loudly about the risks associated with the unthinking adoption of modernity. TemsulaAo is one of those voices that has been sounding the alarm about the potentially devastating impact that the destruction of natural environments can have on both human and non-human life. It has also brought to our attention the natural wealth of the land, as well as the imperative for us to work towards regaining that wealth.

Keyword: Ecofeminism, Nature, Women, Northeast Literature, TemsulaAo

The concept of ecofeminism can be traced back to the Western part of the planet. The environmental feminist movement was initially championed by a French critic by the name of Francois de Bouis. This concept establishes many connections between women and the natural world, including those at the social, historical, material, and spiritual levels. In the book named "Environmental Philosophy: from Animal Rights to Radical Ecology," written by Karen Warren, she discusses a variety of connections between women and nature, including philosophical, empirical, and experimental. There are a variety of perspectives—symbolic, epistemological, political, theoretical, etc.—that offer opposing as well as mutually complimentary analyses of the nature of the dual dominances of women and nature.

To begin, critics hold the belief that in western societies, women and nature have both been seen in the prevalent social paradigms as being of lower value than other entities. The fact that these two occupy the same position creates a relationship between them. The history of oppression, to which both women and the natural world have been subjected, is the second factor that links the two. Thirdly ecofeminists scholars believe that women's material reality is such that when nature is damaged women's lives are also altered. Considering that feminist and ecological theory both strive towards egalitarian, non-hierarchical systems, eco-feminism is an attempt to unite the two schools of thought. (Agrawal 37) And last but not least, there is a link that can be characterised by references to spirituality. Scholars and sceptics alike have shown a significant amount of interest in the western concept of spirituality. A significant number of people today also reject the notion that women and the natural world have a profoundly connected spiritual history. They do not believe that there is a feminine principle that can be found in nature and that this principle links women and nature together. When we take into consideration all of these notions while discussing Indian ecofeminism, we see that we are not completely unfamiliar with these ideas. The eastern world has long since understood the so-called "female principle," which is becoming increasingly popular in the western world. But, shortly after India gained its independence and, as a result, began the process of modernising its land, a new danger appeared that upsets the peaceful balance that exists between humans and environment. A great number of authors, particularly Indian women poets, have used their works to express their anxieties and concerns. They have discussed their connection to the land, their eco-consciousness, their fury that the land is being destroyed by forces from the outside world, their dread of a dark future, and finally their hope for a change.



In *“Myth and Mystery: Contemporary Poetry in English from Northeast India”*, N. Chandra and Nigamananda Das observe

Indian English poetry from North-eastern part of India is rich in enshrining various aspects of the ecology, of the region. It has been a fashion with the poets of the region to celebrate the ecological glory of the region and their ecological awareness. The ruthless act of deforestation and oppression upon the Mother Nature in various ways by destroying the serenity of the nature, obliterating the natural environment, killing rare birds and animals and distorting the landscape and biodiversity, have been sharply reacted upon by these poets. (Chandra and Das, 35)

This observation stands true in the case of Tamsula Ao. She incorporates the voices and concerns for her people and her land into her poems as a representative of her people. Prasad makes a reference to the poet in the preface to the Books of Songs when he says that she looks for the past that has vanished into the mist of time.

Her poetry exposes the truths of modernisation. Tamsula Ao laments the wretched state of our world as a result of urbanisation, modernity, and industrialisation in her poem "Lament for an Earth" (Songs that Tell, 45-47). By employing personification and feminine terminology, Ao here depicts nature as a living entity. She bemoans the state of the planet, where formerly there was a "verdant," "virgin," and "vibrant" forest, full of big trees that offered coolshade to the birds and animals. The poem begins with "Once upon a time". This shows her tendency to go back to her past in order to evaluate her present. The vibrancy of the living earth that she has witnessed in her past is lost now. Now it lies barren. She imagines the earth as a woman who has been raped. She writes:

Alas for the forest
Which now lies silent
Stunned and stumped
With the evidence
Of her rape. (Lines, 21-25)

The damage done to the planet has reached a point beyond which it can no longer be repaired. She likens the transition from agricultural to industrial production to the victorious march of an elephant across the surface of the world. The sight of lorries driving away with the treasures of the land causes her a great deal of distress. The combination of deforestation and industrialization has done a number on her land. The rush towards

modernization is so intense that it has utterly disregarded the land and the people who live on it. There is a major link between a despoiled planet and a woman who has been mistreated. The forces of capitalism, which are controlled by influential men, are responsible for the destruction of the world. On the other side, the violent male force is also responsible for the violation of women.

She talks about the rivers in her poem "Cry, for the River". She travels further back in time and recalls a mighty river that provided sustenance to the country as well as the people who lived there. The water was "clear and content" and teeming with life, such as "small fishes" that were "Growing big." Along the river's bank, a variety of other creatures, such as deer, come to feed. They consume the river water "As though it was honey". Yet things are different now than they were before. The process of urbanisation has resulted in the pollution of the river's natural flow, which is now full of waste material. It is "muddy" and overflowing with the garbage from the industrial operations. She imagines the river once more, this time with a lady who is unable to bear children or bring new life into the world.

She reveals the truths about the concept of development and advancement in the poem "Blessings," Almost as soon as it gained its independence, India began following the western model of economic growth. This model focuses primarily on the accumulation of capital. It brought about a shift away from the age old practises of farming and towards industrial farming. India is transitioning from an agricultural nation to an industrial one in order to meet the requirements to become a developing nation on par with the other western nations. The blind adoption of modern practises has resulted in unparalleled levels of destruction being inflicted on the natural environment. Along with it came a change in the lives of numerous people who live in close proximity to natural environments. Ao believes that the apparent progress and development of human civilization has been at the expense of the gifts that nature and the natural resources have delivered, and he contends that this has been at the expense of wasting these things. In addition to this, she emphasises her disdain of the unequal distribution of natural resources that is a direct result of class strife. There is a significant connection between having a concern for the environment and the appropriate utilisation of natural resources as well as the distribution of those resources in an equal manner. She writes,

Blessed are the blind



For they see not

What they with sight

Have done to the light. (Lines 11-14)

Ao feels that those who are unable to see what happens around us are the most fortunate ones as they do not have to witness the damage caused by the powerful people to fulfil their selfish purposes.

The author describes the deterioration of the tranquilly and verdure in her locality in another poem that is named "My hills." She ruminates on a feeling of estrangement that she has in the here and now while simultaneously pining for times gone by. She writes:

But to-day I no longer know my hills,

The birdsong is gone

Replaced by the staccato

Of sophisticated weaponry. ("My Hills" 19-23)

The political unrest that prevails in Ao's homeland is brought into focus here. Not only has the industrialization of the area caused damage to nature, but the military invasion has also caused a great deal of destruction to the environment. Ecofeminists are of the opinion that this military might is, once again, a force comparable to that of patriarchy and capitalism. It is essential to maintain control over the land in order to maintain control over the people. It also makes it simpler for the owners of major corporations to acquire land for large-scale factories and businesses to construct their operations on. Because of this, they are able to exert authority over the natural resources. This is a profit-driven system, but only a select few will enjoy its benefits.

Awardee of the Padma Shree (Indian) TemsulaAo, a prominent ecofeminist poet who writes in English and hails from Nagaland, is considered to be one of the most important of North East Asian writers. In her poetry, she discusses both the cultural and physical ecosystem that can be found in Nagaland. Ao not only speaks about the natural beauty of her homeland in the nature-focused poetry she has written, but she also illustrates the negative impact that humans have on the environment and how it poses a threat. TemsulaAo presents her eco-feminist

point of view in the poems we have been discussing so far. In these poems, she discusses the strong connection that exists between the dominance of nature and woman. On the one hand, glorification of nature, and on the other, protest against the use of the planet as a resource. It is possible to say that TemsulaAo's ecological consciousness of her land makes her an eco-feminist poet, and that she finds her poems a suitable medium to create awareness against the dangers of environmental degradation. TemsulaAo sees herself as a woman who writes about women's experience of nature from the perspective of womanhood, and writes about the experiences of devaluation and exploitation of both women and nature. Ao places a strong emphasis on the significance of preserving trees, not only because doing so is revered, but also because doing so is essential to the continued existence of people and, in particular, future generations. Her responses in these poems have paved the way for the redressal of the loss caused to the environment and also for the realisation of the greatness of the environment's relatedness of everything to everything.

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