



# SUBTLE AND SUBLIME RELATIONSHIP OF WOMAN AND NATURE IN JAHNAVI BARUA'S *REBIRTH*

**Mrs.K.Devi**

Assistant Professor of English  
D.K.M.College For Women, (Autonomous)

Vellore -1

**Abstract:** Ecofeminists have described a number of connections between the oppressions of women and of nature that are significant to understand how environmental issues can be addressed in terms of feminist issue and feminist issue in terms of environmental issues. The inner conflicts and confusions of protagonist's as she tries to grapple with the promises of motherhood and betrayal of her love have been meticulously debicted.

**Key Words:** Ecofeminism, Feminism, Domination, Rejuvenation

## **Introduction:**

Jahnavi Barua is an Indian author from Assam. Barua is a writer based in Bengaluru. She obtained her MBBS at Gauhati Medical College but does not practice medicine. She studied creative writing in the United Kingdom. She is marked by her use of simple words and phrases. She started reading habit at a very early age, when her parents encouraged reading by saying that they will gift books to Jahnavi if she do well in her class. She documents the life and essence of the people living in Assam in her works. She reflects her deep love for her homeland through the lives of her protagonists.

Ecofeminism plays vital role in this novel *Rebirth*. Ecofeminism is a branch of ecocriticism that shows the relationship between ecology and feminism. It shows the oppression of nature linked with women and how the earth is compared to a feminine gender as they are fertile and nurtures their family and finally owned by male as a property. Ecofeminism helps to bring the environment to the forefront of discussion surrounding Feminism. It provides a new and unique perspective in looking at how problems in society and environment are interconnected. Ecofeminism is a type of feminism which aims at equality in society and eliminating the patriarchy.

Vandana Shiva is a world-renowned environmental thinker and activist. She is a prominent figure in Indian ecofeminist movement. She expressed her view about ecofeminism as how oppression linked through gender. In the early 1970's feminist took interest in the environmental movements to explore how oppressions were linked through gender, race, class, and ecology, as well as species and ideas of nationhood. Shiva's book Ecofeminism co-authored with Maria Mies a German professor, offers a critique of patriarchal violence, capitalism, and colonialism. She comments on the reductive nature of scientific reasoning and argues that reductionism influences the way people think about the world around them. Shiva views ecofeminism as recognition of the conquest of nature and the conquest of human beings. She emphasizes the role of mutual care and love in a global civil society. Her book *Staying Alive* argues that there is intimate link between the degradation of women and degradation of nature in contemporary society. She writes, "Women in India are an intimate part of nature, both in imagination and in practice" (Shiva 38).

### **RELATIONSHIP OF WOMEN AND NATURE:**

Women and nature shares a magical relationship in comforting each other. As women nurture nature as their child, nature nurtures women as well in all her situations. In *Rebirth* when Kaberi worried about her loneliness, nature around her only soothes her. This is evident when she says, "Since July, I have been carrying around with me an unremitting ache of loneliness-sunrises and other things can only do so much to assuage that – and it is here, only here, that I feel I am not alone." (RB 5) She says that even the gurgling of dove consoles her and take her memories back to her homeland, where she and her mother sit by the windows in the front room doing embroidery listening to the cooing of doves.

Another description of women nature relationship is clear when Kaberi describes her wedding, "I threw rice over my shoulder as I left my father's home later that morning. I was giving back the rice they had nourished me with all these years." (RB 71) Traditionally the rice toss is a symbolic wish to the just-married couple for a life of prosperity and fruitfulness. Girls are regarded as symbol of Lakshmi, the Hindu deity associated with prosperity and good fortune. Their presence in home is regarded as auspicious. By tossing rice as she departs, the bride communicates that she will continue to pray for the house's welfare, notwithstanding the fact that she is leaving.

Women are responsible for the continuity of the life cycle, like the rebirth of the land. Women reproduce life not only biologically but also through their social role in providing sustenance. Ecofeminism have found the root of dualism and domination in order to discover the roots of oppression of women and nature. We have seen in many ways the oppression of men over women and human over environment. Victoria Davion explains the steps of process of domination, saying that:

These are (i) backgrounding, the oppressors' creation of a dependency on the oppressed while simultaneously denying that dependency; (ii) radical exclusion, constructing supposed differences between oppressors and the oppressed in terms of radical differences in order to justify subordination of the oppressed; (iii) incorporation, the

construction of the devalued side of a dualized pair as lacking morally relevant features associated with the other side; (iv) instrumentalism, the construction of groups seen as morally inferior, lacking any morally important independent interests; (v) homogenization, the denial of differences between those on the underside of dualized pairs (seeing all women or all slaves as the same). (Davion 235)

‘*Divorce! Divorce!* And how will you survive? Haven’t you grown used to all this?’ (RB 85)

These words of Ron towards Kaberi shows the place which Ron given for his own wife in his life. Ron shouted at her when she asked him whether he completely left his affair and came back to her to begin their life again. But he shouted at her saying that he won’t leave his affair for Kaberi. When Kaberi is so much hurt by Ron’s words the nature around her accompany her. We can understand their relationship when Kaberi says, “Night has somehow taken over day and the day is as dark as the night” (RB 87)

Vandana Shiva in her book *Staying Alive Women, Ecology and Survival in India* said that,

“The reduction mind took over tree-planting with ‘social forestry’. Plans were made in national and international capital by people who could not know the purpose of the bonge and the neem, and saw them as weeds. The experts decided that indigenous knowledge was worthless and ‘unscientific’, and proceeded to destroy the diversity of indigenous species by replacing them with a row of eucalyptus seedlings in polythene bags, in government nurseries. Nature’s locally available seeds were laid waste; people’s locally available knowledge and energies were laid waste.” (Shiva 79) As Shiva explains women characters in this novel Rebirth are laid waste by their husbands beginning from Kaberi, her mother and her friend Preetha.

While conversing with her mother, she said in tears, “Your father had wanted to marry someone else. But she was of another religion and the family would not let him and found me instead.” (RB 163) Her mother continues saying that her husband never loved her and there was no love between them and it was like a kind of adjustment and understanding they lived their life these years in front of others. This affects her deeply and she moves towards rejuvenation.

To rejuvenate is to bring renewed life to something old by giving it new vitality, and rejuvenation is the process of freshening something up or reviving it. For instance if we look into river rejuvenation, it is the process of reviving or restoring the natural flow and health of a river that has been damaged because of human activities such as waste dumping, encroachment, and pollution. The process involves removing pollutants, cleaning up riverbeds, and restoring the natural environment around the river. Like reviving nature self-renewal is important for women. Barua clearly explains this through her protagonist Kaberi who finally decides to start new life with her unborn child. After facing all her problems and others situation Kaberi decided to rejuvenate her life along with her unborn child.

“A pain seizes me once again and I give in to it willingly. I surrender to this pain that will release both of us.”(RB 203)

### Conclusion:

Barua's *Rebirth* gives indepth pressure of married woman and how nature helps her to renew herself and getting ready to begin her life confidently with her unborn child. Women and nature disguise their whole self within and expose it whenever necessary. They reveal their inner valuable qualities only when it is needed. Women and nature shares a magical relationship in comforting each other. As women nurture nature as their child, nature nurtures women as well in all her situations.

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