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## Interrogating Ecofeminism in Environmental Movements in India through Cultural Lens

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**Abstract:** Indian culture evolves around nature worship. The five elements of nature are considered sacred and are revered. Men during the Vedic age, lived in close affinity with nature. The paper aims at understanding ecofeminism and environmental consciousness through cultural lens. Environmental consciousness is embedded in ancient Indian culture. Worship of plants and animals is intertwined in Hinduism. The sixth century BC saw the birth of two new religion and both exhibited respect for nature. A respect and reverence for mother nature is seen in the religious texts. Gautam Buddha got enlightenment under Bodhi tree. According to the Jataka, several incarnations of Bodhisattvas are animals. Several Jain Tirthankaras have an animal as their cognizance like bull, elephant, rhinoceros etc. Gandhi's economic model also had deep respect for nature.

Women are the worst victims of environmental degradation. Introduction of new techniques also led to deprivation of traditional practices. Indian women have heralded iconic environmental movements like the Chipko movement of Uttarakhand and the Narmada Bachao Andolan. Ecofeminism establishes a strong connection between woman and nature. Women are closer to nature's conservation and men with nature's exploitation for commercial purposes. Ecofeminism stresses that the oppression of women and nature should be addressed together as both suffer under patriarchy. Somewhere along the line both suffer due to the power structure that is bestowed due to patriarchy. Descriptive and analytical tools are used for the study. The endeavour is to dignify extraordinary courage shown by ordinary women to help conserve nature and thus bring about sustainable development.

**Key-Words:** Ecofeminism, nature, women, vulnerable, environment, sustainable development, victims, exploitation and conservation.

**Bio-Note:** Dr Kauser Tasneem is Assistant Professor in the Department of History, Karim City College, Jamshedpur. Her areas of interest are Modern Indian History, Cultural History and Gender Studies. Several of her papers have been published in reputed journals within the country.

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Indian culture evolves around nature worship. The five elements of nature are considered sacred and are revered. Men during the Vedic age, lived in close affinity with nature. The Varaha Purana says that those who plant five mango trees does not go to hell (Dharmottara) Matsya Purana describes a celebration for planting trees known as the "festival of trees." (Dharmastara)