Introduction

In this anthropocentric world, androcentrism and misogyny have become the order of the day with a capitalistic imperative. Capitalism as well as socialism have contributed to the creation of this situation and there is a fast emerging market economy expanding globally (globalization), where territorial boundaries lose their significance. There are global players, the industrial tycoons, who manipulate and mastermind, the trade, industry, expenses and the quality of life of citizens in the nations of the world. The citizens are no more citizens, they are consumers. In this pinnacle of capitalism, we experience the revival of imperialism and the advent of a neo colonialism. A situation of domination is established intellectually, culturally and economically, not by overt political domination, but by setting the sky as the limit of man’s consumerist ambitions. The so called individualism has entirely lost its significance. There is no socialist rival now remaining in the area to challenge this capitalistic burgeoning. An ever expanding market is maintained, the demands of which will be met by the capitalist. The natural resources on which the capitalist depends for production are
exhaustible. Studies prove that, with the draining of natural resources, especially metals, the traditional economic processes of the world will face serious set backs by the third decade of this century: so globalization is not going to fetch milk and honey for mankind till eternity.

The capitalistic paradise is built on the basic concept of domination. Semitic religions, especially Christianity taught mankind to dominate nature, both animate and inanimate. Lessons of pre-Semitic period when man peacefully coexisted with nature are lost to mankind. The prominence of the West after Renaissance, Reformation Movement and Industrial Revolution made drastic changes in the outlook of the world. European forces controlled the world and the European culture got disseminated globally in the past three centuries.

The methods of domination propagated by capitalism have certain distinguishing features - the domination of nature was the foremost aspect and equally important was the domination of women and thus the genesis of the andocentric world view. The capitalists in their search for markets, established domination over people of various castes, creeds, cultures, continents and ethnicity. An attempt at homogenization of the world is another hidden agenda of capitalist method of domination. The heterogeneity of the
world, which is an ecosystem is opposed for the creation of a global market. The diversity of life and life forms, the ethnicity of human beings, the biodiversity, the myriad range of animal kingdom are all fast approaching extinction or more precisely extermination due to the impact of the global forces. The wonderful contributors in the web of life are all commodified, together with the capitalist’s partner in life – woman. Here we identify the relevance of ecofeminism, which tries to rebuild the web of life for the earth, for women and also for men.

The lost balance of existence is attempted to be reinstated by ecofeminism which has its impact in sociology, economics, environmentalism, feminism, politics and also literature. The need for interdisciplinary understanding for the creation of sustainable ethical code and existential code is underlined by ecofeminism. The compartmentalized branches of learning and literature are to undergo a revolutionary change and are to join together to preserve the earth for the posterity and to acknowledge and accept the dignity of womanhood for the entire mankind.

**The Determinants of Twentieth Century Existence**

Twentieth century laid bare unprecedented, experience in human history. It is the century when man tried to deify himself with the assistance of science and technology or it is the century when
man defied the existence of god. Cultural, intellectual and religious iconoclasm and sabotage took place during the century. Two world wars offered unforgettable experiences to mankind. Socialist efflorescence in the beginning of the century, and the withering away of socialism at the fag end in countries like the U.S.S.R. were other unique experiences of the century. Also, it is the century of overpowering capitalism, even communist China is following pseudo capitalism. The second half of this century brought political freedom to most of the Afro-Asian and Latin-American colonies. Democracy has merely become the outer-raiment of capitalism.

Paul Virilio, the famous French thinker identifies three significant mile stones in the twentieth century. Transportation revolution, transmission revolution and transplantation revolution are the three milestones (137). Rails, roads, airports etc. caused transportation revolution which conquered distance. Radio, television, telephone, computer, internet etc. effected communication revolution and even virtual reality is possible with the advent of cyberspace. Technology has provided means for changing the genetic construction of people. Biotechnology has facilitated the transplantation of ‘spare parts’ in a human body and now we can become ‘cyborgs’. ‘Cloning’, ‘genome mapping’ etc are some other advantages provided by a new branch genetic engineering.
However, science is no more a path to knowledge, it has become the tool for domination and dogmatism. Technological fundamentalism is more dangerous than religious fundamentalism and in contemporary India we witness the convergence of both.

There took place great ideological revolutions in the twentieth century. Literature and arts also underwent radical changes. As early as 1922, German social scientist Max Weber had pointed out the spiritual corruption or deprivation of modern life as the unmagicking or disenchantment of life. Rachael Carson in her book, *The Silent Spring* came forward with questions about the toxic nature of progress. The mankind was slowly advancing towards an environmental awareness. Ecophilosophy evolved as a significant stream of thought like Marxism or feminism. Ecophilosophy is exerting its influence on arts, literature and political ideology. Ecofeminism is the converging point of ecophilosophy and feminism, which is developing as the fresh hope for mankind in the twenty first century. In the coming pages there is an attempt to trace the progress towards ecofeminism through various ideological junctures of the twentieth century.

**Frankfurt School's Critical Theory**

The institute for social research in Frankfurt had attempted to develop a multidisciplinary theory about society and culture to
address the social problems of modern existence. Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno jointly published *Dialectic of Enlightenment* in 1945. The problem of domination was dealt with in this book with a Marxist perspective (50). The dehumanizing tendencies of modern technological progress, its destruction of the environment, its potential for totalitarian politics etc were discussed. Frankfurt philosophers identified that though Marxism had a humanitarian approach and could identify the domination of the working class by the capitalists, they were following the enlightenment myth of progress through the domination of nature.

Herbert Marcuse, Karl Wittfogel, Erich Fromm and Leo Lowenthal were among the followers of the Frankfurt School. These theorists argued that the material conditions in an inequality or alitarian class society create suffering. But the unequal social conditions are not unavoidable. Freedom from pain and suffering is possible in a just society and it is Critical Theory’s goal to envision that society and its attainment through the fulfillment of human needs and potentials. William Leiss published *The Domination of Nature* in 1972 in which he argued that it was a Francis Bacon who formulated the modern agenda of power over nature through science and technology. He highlighted the role of technology in mastering both the external world of nature and the human being (158-164).
Critical Theory remained imperfect due to its inability to suggest a real alternative for the anthropocentric approach. Also critical theorists couldn’t effectively associate themselves with the Green Movement.

**Environmental Economics and Green Politics**

The relationship between first world capitalism and third world colonialism was studied by Immanuel Wallerstein. The improved quality of life in the first world was achieved by exploiting the people and natural resources of the third world (80-85). Environmental economists like Herman Daly, suggested that unrestrained nature of material progress cannot be maintained. The world should accept a very steady state or a very low growth of global economy in which population, resources and artifacts remain at a constant level. The Baconian concept of nature as an unending store house should be given up. The delicacy of the biosphere must be accepted and this awareness should go hand in hand with democratically planned production for human need.

The green political groups which gained acceptance in various parts of the world, especially in Europe, in the 1980’s, were trying to give a practical shape to the theories of forerunners. Brian Tokar, the green theorist suggested the development of community based institutions and Greens in local government, to think globally
and act locally (141-148). Empowerment of the individual, coalition building, and living within the means of the bioregion are certain basic stand points of greens. The green programme for change is based on four pillars: ecology, grassroot democracy, social justice and non-violence.

**Deep Ecology**

The inability of the Green Movement to identify the anthropocentrism involved in the domination of nature gave birth to the new ecological movement, Deep Ecology. Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess and American sociologists, Bill Devall and George Sessions contributed greatly to the development of this stream. The anthropocentrism of the West must be replaced with a new metaphysics, psychology ethics and science. They sought alternatives from the western and eastern philosophy and the insights of the indigenous peoples. Concepts about interconnectedness, intrinsic value, self realizing systems etc. were formulated by Freya Mathews, the Australian philosopher. Deep Ecologists’ emphasis on anthropocentricism, made them rather dogmatic and yet they couldn’t effectively combat the role of capitalism and political economy in the domination of nature and human beings.
Social Ecology

The basic concept of Social Ecology, like Critical Theory is domination. Murray Bookchin is the major contributor and propagator of this philosophy. His main contention is that the domination of human beings is historically and casually prior to the domination of nature. The early tribal societies were basically egalitarian. The increasing prestige of male elders created social hierarchies and inequalities that led to power over other human beings especially women and ultimately over nature. Social Ecology stands for removing hierarchy and domination from society and domination over nature. Dissolution of state as a source of authority and control and the establishment of an ecological society through dependence on resources and energy of the bioregion, grass root democracy with libertarian municipalities linked together in a confederation are some of the significant dreams of Social Ecologists.

Socialist Ecology

Marxist economist James O’Connor put forward the concepts of socialist ecology which is based on political economy. He argued that only Marxist attitudes towards capital, profit, production, exploitation etc. can adequately account for the degradation of nature under Capitalism. But he takes care to distinguish his path
from that of the failed experience of erstwhile Soviet Union, whose industrialization only resulted in environmental disaster. He wants to follow the path of green social movements, with democratic commitments and internationalism. The significance of maintaining biodiversity and the impact of ecology are the cornerstones in the stream like Deep Ecology or Social Ecology.

Environmental Justice

This ideology upholds the equitable distribution of the minimal resources of the world among people of various categories without a distinction of First World or Third World, man or woman, Black or White. Mankind is to be saved entirely from the harms of environmental misuse, scarcity, pollution etc. The topic of domination propagated by Critical Theory is extended by the Environmental Justice movement to encompass minorities and Third World people who have been victimized by colonial and capitalist expansion. Western style development project is questioned and restructured by Environmental Justice. Vandana Shiva in *Staying Alive* calls western mode of development as maldevelopment. Development is seen in India as a post-colonial project, rooted in the domination of women, tribal people and nature, by patriarchy and capitalism.
**Spiritual Ecology**

In 1967, the famous historian Lynn White Jr. said that the domination of nature has Judeo-Christian sanction as mentioned in the book of Genesis 1:28 “to increase, multiply, replenish the earth and subdue it”. He declared that Christianity is the most anthropocentric religion in the world. It destroyed the pagan animism, and made possible the exploitation of nature in a totally indifferent manner. With the advent of Spiritual Ecology, mainstream religions have reinterpreted their relationship with nature. There is even a new branch of theology called Eco theology, linking theology and ecology. Spiritual tradition of the Orient and the pagan traditions have been revived for this purpose.

Joanna Macy, Charlene Spretnak, Carol Christ etc are significant contributors in this field. Humans are considered as caretakers of the rest of creation. Respect for women, concern for the deprived, community based economic alternatives, creation of Goddess image instead of a male god, etc. are some of the avenues of interest for this group.

**Post Modern Science**

Post Modern Science questions many of the fundamental assumptions of the traditional mechanistic science. The world is no more considered as a set of dead atoms, it itself is considered as a
living organism. James Lovelock’s Gaia hypothesis argues that the earth maintains its atmosphere, atmospheric temperature and pressure, plant life and animal life and the earth itself is a living organism. Physics is undergoing a paradigm shift for explaining the ecological awareness.

Chaos Theory is another postulate of post modern science, which argues that environmental and biological systems such as weather, temperature and population cannot be explained correctly by the linear equations of mechanistic science and there can be non-linear chaotic relationships.

**Cornucopia**

Cornucopians are a set of optimists who believe that science and technology can effectively find solutions for environmental problems. The dangers envisioned by environmentalists are illusory or exaggerated. This standpoint is propagated mainly by industrial pressure groups, global economists and demographers. They argue that the dynamism of capitalism will generate solutions to environmental problems as they arise. There has been a steady improvement in the quality of life of people in the developed and developing countries regarding life expectancy, health care etc. due to the impact of capitalism.
The scarcity of natural resources is only a temporary phenomenon. When a specific resource becomes harder to obtain, the price increases, leading capitalist entrepreneurs to search for substitute sources, processes or materials. The discovery of alternatives reduces the prices. When copper became scarce and costly, it was replaced by fibre optic cables instead of copper wires. So scarcity is an economic, not an ecological phenomenon.

Cornucopains take a Utilitarian approach towards nature. Nature is significant only if it has an impact on wealth or welfare. They uphold the role of entrepreneurs and disregard the contribution of ideological and political movements in the development of the world.

**Ecofeminism**

Ecofeminism is an ideology of integration, preservation, protection and sustainability. The fundamentalist stand of Deep Ecologists the ideological hangover of Social Ecologists and Socialist Ecologists, the romantic charm of Spiritual Ecology and the concepts of Environmental Justice and Post Modern Science are all effectively utilized for the frame work of ecofeminist ideology, which is actually the integration of ecological ideology and feminist ideology. This ideology aims at the preservation and protection of the earth and the mankind through sustainable means of existence.
and development. The earth cannot be hereafter seen merely as a
source of raw materials for technological production but as the sole
haven for animate and inanimate forms of existence.

Petra Kelley, the famous ecofeminist activist in the forward for
the anthology of ecofeminist writings, *Healing the Wounds: The
Promise of Ecofeminism* (ed. by. Judith plant) provides an
ideological locale for ecofeminism and lays bare its immediate
agenda:

...our aim is a non-violent and ecological feminist
transformation of societal structures. Our aim is radical,
non violent change outside-and inside of us. The
macrocosm and the microcosm! This has to do with
transforming power! Not power over or power to
dominate or power to terrorize- but shared power,
abolishing power as we know it, replacing it with the
power of non-violence or something common to all, to
be used by all and for all ! Power as the discovery of
our own strength- as opposed to a passive receiving of
power exercised by others, often in our name.

Creating a truly free society- based on ecological
and feminist principles that can mediate humanity’s
relationship with nature- is our common aim. Sharing
and giving solidarity across all ideological and geographical boundaries when our sisters and brothers are repressed and discriminated against is also our common aim. Living, producing, working, and living in comprehensible human dimensions is another common goal for us all...

Ecofeminism must be practiced in our daily lives, and should thereby also contribute to an understanding of the connections between the domination of persons and the domination of non human nature. Ecofeminism draws on the principles of unity in diversity, a most important aspect in times of social simplification. (x, xi)

Simone de Beauvoir’s Contribution

Before the advent and supremacy of Semetic religions there prevailed an Arcadian pattern of life in the world. A mosaic of cultures and beliefs existed in the world which was pantheistic and polytheistic. Human existence was part of natural existence. The monotheism of Semetic religions damaged the diversity of human cultures and severed the bond with nature “A dualistic Christianity had become ascendant with the earlier demise of old goddesses, religions, paganisms, and animistic belief systems” (Reuther 150)

The western industrial civilization accelerated the process of
disenchantment between man and nature. Unchecked scientific exploration and technological exploitation of nature was the next state. The nature became “the other” to be objectified and subordinated.

There is a striking similarity between man’s attitudes towards nature and his attitude towards woman in a patriarchal society. Woman has also been objectified and subordinated in patriarchy. According to Simone de Beauvoir woman and nature are the original “others”. “Transcendence” is the work of culture, it is the work of men. It is aimed at overcoming the “Immanence”, that is symbolized by women and creating a culture that is based on the increasing domination of nature. The woman is the symbol of immanence for man. He thinks that he has to sever his link with nature for achieving his manhood and transcendence. de Beauvoir continues:

Man seeks in woman the other as nature and as his fellow being. But we know what ambivalent feelings Nature inspires in man. He exploits her, but she crushes him, he is born of her, and dies in her; she is the source of his being and the realm that he subjugates to his will; Nature is a vein of gross material in which the soul is imprisoned, and she is the supreme reality; she is the contingency and idea, the finite and
the whole; she is what opposes the Spirit, and the Spirit itself. Now ally, now enemy, she appears as the dark chaos from whence life wells up, as this life itself, and as the over-yonder toward which life tends. Woman sums up Nature as Mother, Wife and Idea, these forms now mingle and now conflict, and each of them wears a double visage. (144)

Woman and nature continuously remind man of his mortality in patriarchal civilization. So man tries to achieve transcendence over both. There develops a love hate fetishization of women’s bodies, which eventually leads to a sado masochistic and pornographic attitude towards women as objects to be subdued, humiliated and raped. Susan Griffin in her book *Pornography and Silence* deals with this nature – hating, woman –hating, pornographic attitude of men. The capitalistic commodification of female body is an extended stage of this attitude.

**Francoise d’ Eaubonne’s “The Time for Ecofeminism”**

Shulamith Firestone in her book *The Dialaectic of sex* had pointed out that the liberation of women from patriarchy requires a biological revolution, a process analogous to the economic revolution called for by Marx. In it she also stresses the ecological issues involved in the liberation of women. However it was the
French feminist Francoise d’Eaubonne who took the first significant step for establishing an ideological framework for ecofeminism. She established the Ecology Feminism Centre in 1972 in Paris. *Feminism or Death* is a controversial book by her published in 1974 and in the chapter of the book, “The Time for Ecofeminism”, she raised the issues that established the relevance of ecofeminism. This foundational chapter was not translated to English till 1994. So naturally, most of the early ecofeminist works in English do not mention the contribution of d’Eanbonne. It was the French feminist scholar Ruth Hottell who translated the chapter for the first time.

The Ecology Feminism Centre and the new movement Ecofeminism were attempting a synthesis between the two struggles feminism and ecology “to remake the planet around a totally new model.” The earth is in danger of dying and human beings along with it. The blame for the imminent death of the earth was placed entirely on the shoulders of men. The slogan of the Ecology Feminism Centre was “to tear the planet away from the male today inorder to restore it for humanity for tomorrow… If the male society persists there will be no tomorrow for humanity” (d’ Eaubonne 175).

Perceiving the impact of both capitalism and socialism, D’Eaubonne argued that both of these dominant ideologies of the modern world were equally responsible for ecological degradation.
She pointed out the major ailments of the planet, viz; global population explosion, world wide pollution, American consumerism, urban crowding and violence. She didn’t agree with those who argued that over population is a third world phenomenon. The real cause of sickness was patriarchal power.

D'Eaubonne tried to unearth the history of matriarchy and the ascent of patriarchy. She followed the analysis of nineteenth and early twentieth century proponents of matriarchal societies such as Johann Bachofen, Robert Briffault and August Babel, who saw the world wide defeat of the female sex some five thousand years ago as the beginning of an age of patriarchal power. This male system gave men the power to sow both earth (fertility) and women (fecundity). Women were segregated and subjugated. The earth was appropriated by males. The male society, “built by males and for males” (176) took over the administration of the earth with competition, aggression and sexual hierarchy as the basic features. Patriarchal power promoted greed; there was agricultural over exploitation and industrial over expansion. Woman was reduced to the level of a commodity to be acquired, possessed and exploited. The mother earth also experienced the pangs of phallocracy. “The Earth, symbol and former preserver of the Great Mothers, has had a harder life and has resisted longer; today her conqueror has
reduced her to agony. This is the price of phallocracy”. (188) The family itself is established for the maintenance and continuation of male authority. Today the husband who controls the women’s body and implants her with his seed, the doctor who examines her, the male priest who calls for large family are all the participants in the agenda of phallocracy.

Ecofeminism is introduced as the solution for the ailments of the phallorcratic world. It is a new humanism, which envisions an egalitarian administration and a reborn world. A society in the feminine would not mean power in the hands of women, but no power at all, a situation similar to the withering away of state. The dignity of the human being would be recognized irrespective of the person’s sex. d’Eaubonne argued that there is no incompatibility between the personal interests of the women and that of the entire human community, while individual interests are separate from the general interests of the community. The preservation of the earth is not merely an issue of change or amelioration but a life or death concern for mankind. She is strongly convinced about the accomplishment of “the ecological revolution.” This revolution is to take place in a feminine society. The concluding words of her essay were quite pertinent, “And the planet placed in the feminine will flourish for all”. (194)
American Ecofeminism

Radical cultural feminists, Mary Daly, and Susan Griffin were the pioneers in the United States who introduced ecofeminist thought. “Gyn/Ecology” (1978) of Mary Daly introduced the concept of the wild woman. She adopted an essentialist position to urge women to throw off socially contracted notions of femininity, in order to discover the ‘wild woman’ within. Susan Griffin in her book, Woman and Nature, The Roaring Inside Her developed the idea that women are innately closer to the natural world. In the prologue of the book she wrote,

He says that woman speaks with nature. That she hears voices from under the earth. That wind blows in her ears and trees whisper to her. That the dead sing through her mouth and the cries of infants are dear to her. But for him this dialogue is over. He says he is not part of the world, that he was set on this world as a stranger. He sets himself apart from woman and nature. (1)

She made an important contribution to ecofeminist theory, believing that men’s treatment of women, marked by violence, hatred, self interest and domination equates with their treatment of nature. Nurturing and peaceful co-operation are womanly values
and they are inherently linked with ecologically friendly activities; and avoidance of ecological disaster. Griffin sees nature and women as equally oppressed.

Ynestra King is another contributor, who had derived her ideas from the Frankfurt School. Her article “Feminism and the Revolt of Nature” was a landmark in ecofeminist theory. The disenchantment of the world and the revolt of nature are two basic stand points for her. Ecological feminism is advocated for its liberatory potential to “pose a rational reenchantment that brings together spiritual and material, being and knowing”. (202) The concepts of radical cultural feminism and socialist feminism are utilized by King to formulate her concepts. Radical cultural feminists argue that women and nature can be liberated only through a feminist separatist movement that fights their exploitation through the overthrow of patriarchy. Socialist feminist identify the historically constructed material conditions of production and distribution as the base for changing the superstructure of culture and consciousness. Ynestra King argues that underlying the positions of both radical feminists and socialist feminists, there is a false separation of nature from culture. She places the transformative ecofeminism as the one offering an understanding of the dialectic between nature and
culture, and also which is the key to overcome the domination of both women and nature (203,204).

**Deep Ecology, Social Ecology and Ecofeminism**

Val Plumwood, the Australian philosopher in the article, “Ecosocial Feminism as a General Theory of Oppression” extends the scope of the analysis by including Deep Ecology and Social Ecology in the study together with ecofeminism. Deep ecology correctly challenges the human centeredness of Social Ecology, but Social Ecology is also right in its analysis that hierarchical differences within the human society affect the character of environmental problems. There is a scope for a co-operative approach among these ideologies. Ecofeminism has the potential to recognize the relevance of relations and mutuality of ideologies. It highlights the various forms of oppression, such as those affecting women, minorities, the colonized, animals and nature. The various forms of domination has a web like character and a cooperative strategy of web repair including Social Ecology and Deep Ecology is suggested by ecofeminism. Together with a liberatory theory, ecofeminism aims at formulating practical solutions. These practical solutions are to be devised by mankind and they are to give the assurance about future (208-216).
The article “Ecofeminism and Deep Ecology” by Freya Mathews, another Australian author, discusses the need to reconcile ecofeminism with Deep Ecology. There are a number of scholars who have pointed out the differences between the two movements including Ariel Salleh, Marti Kheel, Warwick Fox, Michel Zimmerman and Jim Cheney. Deep Ecology has a holistic view of the world, as an extended self writ large. Ecofeminism envisions the world as a community of beings with which one has compassionate caring relationships. Mathews believes that through its ethic of compassion, ecofeminism can humanize Deep Ecology, which has become embittered toward human rapaciousness, seeing humans as a species bent on destroying other species. But Deep Ecology can also contribute to the deepening of ecofeminism by asking it to see the whole as an internally connected moral order, not just a family of individuals for whom one intimately cares (239-244).

**Essentialism in Ecofeminism**

Essentialism is a major issue to be classified in ecofeminism. Do women (and men) have innate unchanging characteristics (essences) or are all male and female qualities historically contingent? This essentialist issue is discussed by Elizebeth Carlassare in her article “Essentialism in Ecofeminist Discourse”. Do the reproductive biological functions of women constitute their
The essentialist perceptions of women are closer to nature. The biological functions of reproduction have historically been used as the tool for domination to limit their social roles to child bearers, child rears, caretakers and housekeepers. Women need not assert any special relationship with nature which men cannot have. Such a move to set themselves up as the sole caretakers of nature would only aggravate their own oppression and thwart their hopes for liberation and equality.

There are mainly five streams noted in ecofeminism. Radical or cultural ecofeminism, spiritual ecofeminism, ecofeminist theology, social ecofeminism and socialist ecofeminism. Carlassare argues that the essentialist debate in ecofeminism reflects the concerns raised by social and socialist ecofeminists that cultural ecofeminism is essentialist. Cultural ecofeminism approaches things from a spiritual and initiative way, while socialist ecofeminists adopt materialist/ constructivist ways of knowing. But these different approaches are to be taken as sources of strength of the ideology. Ecofeminists of various streams should be able to unite themselves in the fight for their rights and preservation of nature. “Unity in diversity” can be read as “differences does not have to mean domination” (Carlassare 232).
Certain Basic Percepts

It seems that we have yet to mention the basic percepts of ecofeminism in simple terms. There are certain general features shared by all major streams of the ideology. It can be seen as a holistic value system. Janis Brikeland points out some basic percepts to which most ecofeminists would subscribe,

1. Fundamental social transformation is necessary. We must reconstruct the underlying values and structural relations of our cultures. The promotion of equality, nonviolence, cultural diversity, and participatory, noncompetitive, and nonhierarchical forms of organization and decision making would be among the criteria for these new social forms.

2. Everything in nature has intrinsic value. A reverence for, and empathy with, nature and all life (or spirituality) is an essential element of the social transformation required.

3. Our anthropocentric view point, instrumentalist values and mechanistic model should be rejected for a more biocentric view that can comprehend the interconnectedness of all life processes.

4. Humans should not attempt to manage or control nonhuman nature, but should work with the land. The use of
agricultural land should be guided by an ethic of reciprocity. Humans should intrude upon the remaining natural ecosystems and processes only where it is necessary to preserve natural diversity.

5. Merely redistributing power relationships is not the answer. We must change the fact of power-based relationships and hierarchy and move toward an ethic based on mutual respect. We must move beyond power.

6. We must integrate the false dualisms that are based on male/female polarity (such as thought versus action, the spiritual versus the natural, art versus science, and experience versus knowledge) in our perception of reality. The dualistic conceptual framework of patriarchy supports the ethic of dominance and divide us against each other, our “selves” and non human nature

7. Process is as important as goals, simply because how we go about things determines where we go. As the power based relations and processes that permeate our societies are reflected in our personal relationships, we must enact our values.

8. The personal is political. We must change the ideology that says the morality of the (female) private sphere has no application to the (male) public sphere of science, politics and industry. We must work to
rebalance the masculine and feminine in ourselves and society.

9. We cannot change the nature of the system by playing patriarchal “games”. If we do, we are abetting those who are directly involved in human oppression and environmental exploitation. We must therefore withdraw power and energy from the patriarchy. (20)

Ecocriticism and Ecofeminist Criticism

Eco-criticism and ecofeminist criticism are entirely new perspectives in literary criticism. These approaches do not distance literature from other branches of human learning and culture, but effect a fusion of human understanding. With the advent of these two streams the literary critic cannot remain merely as a specialist. He is to become an interpreter of the basic questions and concerns of existence, of organic and inorganic forms, of animal life and plant life. He is to actively engage in the process of generating an ecoaesthetics. Literary criticism becomes entirely inter disciplinary.

The relationship that exists between the literary texts and the human existence, society and nature is studied by an ecocritic, from an environmental perspective. The ecofeminist critic is highlighting the issues involved in the domination of nature and also of women. These two category of critics have to be in close touch with the
debates of naturalists and environmental activists. The basic principles of ecology as a pure science and a social science, understanding about the causes for modern environmental crises, knowledge about ecophilosophy, environmental psychology, history of Greens movement, anthropological awareness, local myths, folklores, latest innovation in science, are all required for the generation of eco aesthetics.

In 1978, William Reuckert wrote the article entitled, “Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism” in the magazine Iowa Review. Reuckert was the first critic to use the term ecocriticism. However Joseph Meeker’s seminal book published in 1974, The Comedy of Survival: Studies in Literature and Ecology is considered as a pioneering work in ecocriticism, though he hadn’t used the term. This provocative book offered a genuinely new perspective for approaching literature and ecology. Meeker wrote:

Human beings are the earth’s only literary creatures … If the creation of literature is an important characteristic of the human species, it should be examined carefully and honestly to discover its influence upon human behaviour and natural environment – to determine what role, if any, it plays, in the welfare and survival of mankind and the insight it offers into human
relationships with other species and with the world around as. Is it an activity which adapts us better to the world or one which estranges us from it? From the unforgiving perspective of evolution and natural selection does literature contribute more to our survival than it does to our extinction? (3-4)

Meeker defines literary ecology as the study of biological themes and relationships which appear in literary works. He also makes an attempt to discover what roles have been played by literature in shaping the environmental outlook of human beings. He examines comedy and tragedy, pastoral and picaresque and offers ecological readings of Shakespeare's Hamlet and Dante's Divine Comedy.

The posterity might say that the greatest tragedy that befell mankind was industrial revolution. Greed for wealth, consumerism and domination are making the earth uninhabitable. It was romanticism which first grew up as a movement in literature, refuting the claims of industrial revolution. Wordsworth, William Blake, Keats, Shelley, Coleridge, Walt Whitman, G.M Hopkins and others in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries sought refuge in the lap of nature; a pastoral land.
There is a striking difference between romanticism and ecocriticism. Romanticism is essentially anthropocentric which ecocriticism never accepts. Nature for a romantic is an Arcadia for a temporary and ephemeral release from the urban world. The social frame work of the period of romanticism does not exist now. The world faces serious threats. An imminent nuclear holocaust, depletion of the ozone layer and forests, the emergence of the global village, the ghastly impact of biotechnology, (human beings can be converted to cyborgs) were not problems faced by romantics; so ecocriticism is to evolve criteria for literature that excel romanticism, social realism, modernism and postmodernism.

The contributions of four women authors, Isabella Bird, Mary Austin, Rachel Carson and Annie Dillard, which span a period of over a hundred years, give us awareness about the involvement of women in the preservation of nature and the feminine values. *A Lady’s Life in the Rocky Mountains* is a series of letters Isabella Bird wrote to her sister during her visit to Rocky Mountains in 1873. These letters were published in book form, which attracted immense readership. Bird’s book provides an excellent beginning point in understanding how women respond to nature in America. She undertakes the journey all alone in winter on her horse back through unmarked trails. She attempted to get far enough away from cities and settlements, so that she could experience nature alone. She gets a better understanding about her own self, her place in nature, and a contemplative mood to experience God. She hated the so-called development of natural landscape by American entrepreneurs. She condemns the destruction of nature by miners. Mountain Jim is an interesting character, an ardent lover of nature, lover of Victorian heritage, but he is finally turned down by Isabella Bird. She hates the conscious efforts at civilizing people. However she returns to England after her encounter with the wilderness. She was a pioneering woman who could hear the call of nature.
Mary Austin’s *The Land of Little Rain* published in 1903 is another landmark work which dealt with the relationship between the geological and biophysical landscape which includes humans. It seeks to resolve the conflict between nature and culture. She finds justification for all aspects of nature and refutes the hierarchical traditions in western culture that imply that the desert is wasteland, snakes are evil and man controls nature. The successful cohabitation of various living forms in a desert is the theme of the book. Her family took up dry land farming in the San Joaquin Valley in 1886 and thereafter several decades were spent there. Austin values all life forms in the desert and attempts to show how each small piece is integral to the larger whole. There is a reciprocal relationship between human culture and nature. Human culture is affected by the landscape as well as effecting changes in it. Austin reminds mankind to respond in an interactive rather than hierarchical mode. She warns us against the oncoming destructions of the wilderness. “There is an economy of nature, but with it, all there is not sufficient account taken of the works of men. There is no scavenger that eats tin cans, and no wild thing leaves a like disfigurement on the forest floor” (40). These words are quite pertinent now as we face a world dumped with non degradable wastes like plastic.
In the beginning of this chapter there is a mention about *The Silent Spring* of Rachel Carson, which is remembered for her indictment of the life destroying potential of pesticides. There is another significant book by her *The Sea Around Us* published in 1951 and it is a scientific study of the oceans which have great social and ecological implications. Carson recognizes an organic interactive connection between humans and the rest of the biosphere. She saw the oceans as the womb of life, the perfect beginning point for a study about the origin of life:

“Fish, amphibian and reptile, warm blooded birds and mammals, each of us carries in our veins a salty stream, in which the elements sodium, potassium and calcium are combined in almost the same proportions as the sea water”. (14)

The sea is still retained in our lives,

“each of us begins his individual life as a miniature ocean within his mother’s womb, and in the stages of his embryonic development, repeats the stages by which race evolved, from gill-breathing inhabitants of a water world to creatures able to live on land”. (14)

The author expresses serious concern about the hubris attached to the discovery and inventions of man and about the
historical inability of people to foresee the consequences of their actions in respect to nature. The sort of optimism about the role that science can play in shaping nature is lost to a great extent in her *Silent Spring*. She recognized the destructive impact of civilization on the environment and underlined the fact that the environment is unable to protect itself from human interference.

The complexity and depth of the topic is more effectively discussed in Annie Dillard’s *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*. The effort is to trace the macrocosm from the microcosm. Tinker Creek is the frame of reference for the author to understand the changing patterns of life. As Mike Major pointed out, Dillard brings to her work, “an artist’s eye, a scientist’s curiosity, a metaphysician’s mind, all woven together, in what might be called, essentially, a theologian’s quest” (363). The nature of the search is such that it also ends up as an existentialistic quest. Is human culture and civilization justifiable in nature? Was it improvement or impairment? Dillard finds the American Indian culture closer to her perspective. Her book is offering an intellectual and emotional retrospection and takes us to the shores of America in the seventeenth century. The futility of the efforts to turn the wilderness to the garden of culture and the possibility that the garden will yield to wilderness at any moment are haunting the author. The meaning and relevance of modern culture
is discussed in the text and the unique feminine perspective is quite noteworthy. Before culture, there was nature, after culture; there will continue to be nature. So life should continue to exist in nature and culture should be able to accommodate the ecofeminist approach.

An innovative ecofeminist study of American literature is given by Annette Kolodny in her *The Lay of the Land: Metaphor as Experience and History in American Life and Letters*. She surveys the male authored American literature from early exploration narratives to the present. There are certain interesting observations in the text including the discovery of a pervasive metaphor of “land as woman”, a linguistic construction that reveals much about the fantasies of gratification, psychosexual parallels in the domination and exploitation of the land and woman. If there is to be a change in our treatment of the land, we must change the language that we use to describe it.

Carolyn Merchant in her book, *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology and the Scientific Revolution*, traces the historical background of the exploitation of nature. The Renaissance Movement, and the growth of science and Industrial Revolution in Europe, helped the creation of a mechanistic world view and thereafter people regarded nature as inanimate. The concept of an organic “Mother Earth”, was done away with and an unrestrained
exploitation of the resources of the earth took place in Europe and the colonies. The author also critically reevaluates the ideas of Francis Bacon, William Harvey, Rene Descartes, Isaac Newton and G.W Lebeniz which provided the justification for the exploitation of nature.

*The Arrogance of Humanism* by David Ehrenfeld, a professor of biology, is a revolutionary book which points out the failure of humanism as a dominant religion of our time and as a guiding philosophy of life. The undue faith in reason and human power has led us into a mistaken belief in human omnipotence, and a foolish assumption that all problems can be solved by people. The author makes use of wide ranging literary and philosophical references that the text is a good specimen for the interdisciplinary nature of ecocriticism.

*Forests: The Shadow of Civilization* by Robert Pogue Harrison is giving the history of forests in the cultural imagination of the West. Forests had both a positive and negative influence in shaping the institutions of culture. Family, law, religion, city, etc were all established in opposition to the wilderness of the forests. Forests were seen as both profane and sacred, lawless and just, gloomy and enlightening. Deforestation is not mainly the destruction of an ecosystem, but a loss of cultural memory, myths and symbols. The
author makes use of a wide range of references including Greek mythology, Gilgamesh, Ovid, Aristotle, Ariosto, Dante, Shakespeare, Descartes, and Rousseau etc. Desertification of human mind and nature will be the ultimate consequence of deforestation.

Ecofeminism is not a shallow compartmentalized ideology. It is an ideology for the recognition of women, for the preservation of nature, and for the sustenance of life on earth. Culture or literature can prevail only if life prevails.