

## **The Voiceless Crave: an Ecofeministic Perspective on Margaret Atwood's *The Rest* and Joyce Kilmer's *Trees***

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### **Abstract:**

Ecofeminism has become a trending topic of discussion and presentation in today's world of literature. There are several ecofeminist circles in each and every country. It is a long journey that has been undergone. Almost all the countries' literature has produced a great deal of art and literary pieces on ecofeminism. Most of the ecofeministically themed works has arrived even before the theory is named. The paper presents a comparison of the poem, *The Rest* by Margaret Atwood, a renowned Canadian poet, novelist, ecofeminist, social activist and novelist and the poem, *Trees* by Joyce Kilmer, an American poet. Creator had left his creation in the hands of his yet another creation to rule over the rest of the creation. The paper presents a question: Is this a universally devised rule or a mere preconception that exists from the genesis of the earth? Both the poems taken under study reflect that even the writers whose pens are powerful have given a hopeless end for their piece of writing. But a change in the thought can create a change in the world. The difficulty lies in unlearning and forgetting the concept of domination and subordination. The relearning of evenness may hope for betterment.

**Key Words:** Ecofeminism, learning Vs unlearning, domination Vs subordination and hope Vs despair

Ecofeminism is a discipline to be followed to emancipate the ignorant subordinate subjects. It has become a trending topic of discussion and presentation in today's world of literature. There are several ecofeministic circles in each and every country. A long journey has been undergone fighting out

anthropocentricism to reach this fame. Almost all the countries' literature has produced a great deal of art and literary pieces on ecofeminism. Most of the ecofeministically themed works had arrived even before the theory is named. The paper presents a comparison of the poem, *The Rest* by Margaret Atwood the poem, *Trees* by Joyce Kilmer. Margaret Atwood, a renowned Canadian poet, ecofeminist, social activist and novelist has received Man Booker Prize in 2000, Hammett Prize in 2000, Arthur C. Clarke Award in 1987, Guggenheim fellowship in 1989, Governor General Award, Franz Kafka Award, the National Book Critics and PEN Center USA Lifetime Achievement Awards. Alfred Joyce Kilmer was an American Poet, journalist, literary critic, lecturer, and editor. *Trees*, published in 1913, in the magazine *Poetry* is his famous poem, which was later with more poems published as a collection titled, *Trees and Other Poems* in 1914. Both the authors taken under study are highly ecofeministic. They reflect the reality of disappointment in the fear of giving false hope.

Creator had left his creation in the hands of his yet another creation to rule over the rest of the creation. The paper presents a question: Is this a universally devised rule or a mere preconception that exists from the genesis of the earth? Both the poems taken under study reflect that even the writers whose pens are powerful have given a hopeless end for their piece of writing. But a change in the thought can create a change in the world. The difficulty lies in unlearning and forgetting the concept of domination and subordination. The paper brings out how a relearning of evenness and a different way of thinking hope for the betterment.

In the year 1974, the French writer Francoise d'Eaubonne, coined the term 'ecofeminism' and it appeared in her *Le Feminisme ou la Mort*. Initially ecofeminism stood as a frame work which connects androcentric superstructure of the society including suppression of women and destruction of nature. Dalton Ress, a postmodern critic says:

*I was justifiable speculative- not through my thick headed male bias (atleast I hope not), but rather my critical approach to ideological philosophies like this one. This connection, at first glance, appealed to me as inappropriately loose and vindictive of the male sex,*

*placing full accountability of environmental destruction solely on men while it should be regarded as a folly of the human species as a whole. (Ress)*

The same critic who has raised the argument, in his anthology, has derived a conclusion on reading Carolyn Merchant's *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution*. He says that the male domination is scientifically justified in the patriarchal society.

There has emerged a huge number of literary works that are speaking about ecofeminism either voluntarily or involuntarily. There is also a huge list of ecofeminist, still the readers commemorate a few writers who has given a very reality of the concept. One such is Margaret Atwood. She has composed several big pieces of literature like *Edible Woman*, *Surfacing* etc... but her eco consciousness is highly concentrated in her simple poems. The poem taken under study is a vivid reflection of women and nature as helpless and voiceless. The poem begins "The rest of us watch from beyond the fence/ as the woman moves with her jagged/ stride into her pain as if into a slow race/ ...We can see her clearly but for her it is running in black smoke" (*The Rest* 1-3). The lines brings out the pathetic condition of women and the rest are mere onlookers watching them walking struggling. The woman who is struggling shouts aloud but the onlookers (*The Rest*) consider it as a mere sound. "We see her body in motion/ but hear no sounds, or we hear/ sounds but no language; or we know/ it is not a language we know/ yet" (*The Rest*). This reminds the theory of Gayathri Spivak's *Can Subaltern Speak?* Speaking is restricted for the women and in the case of nature it cannot speak. The women's suffering is compared to the boiling of porridge, the bursting of grapes and the explosion in mud, which implies, though the pain is severe and the oppressed is completely exhausted, there is a voice neither from them nor for them. The onlookers really know the agony experienced by the woman still they watch as if it is a dumb charades picture. The woman tries to communicate her feelings but the words are considered as mere sounds it is not at all considered as a language. It is only the grasses that light up with forgiveness. Grasses are given a human animation because of human's indifference to the call of another race of human. If there is a pain there should be gain but in the case of women's suffering gain is an exception.

The poem reflects the reality of facing the death and until someone faces it in person he/ she cannot understand. A single word of hope is used in the whole poem that is the 'spring' but it is ironical. The title of the poem *The Rest* is the onlookers who circumvent like a fence and watches lifeless so the poet compensates the liveliness by personifying the grasses. Yet another view is that the title *The Rest* indicates the eternal rest of the women who is suffering. "There is pain but no arrival at anything" (*The Rest*) says the poet and closes her poetry which concludes that the death (The rest) is the only achievement. The mysterious character who experiences the pain appears to be a prisoner who achieved 'the rest' while craving for the freedom.

Ecofeminism is very subtle in Joyce Kilmer's *Trees*. The popularity of this poem is in its simplicity. He calls tree as a poem "A tree whose hungry mouth is prest/ Against the earth's sweet flowing breast;" (*Trees*2-4). The tree is symbolically a woman who is closely connected to the mother earth. Like the tree whose branches stretches out to God in prayers women hope in the prayers all day. Like a tree which submits and adapts itself to each and every season, women adapts to the situations and people she meets. "Poems are made by fools like me, / But only God can make a tree" (*Trees*). The poet's end note gives an impression that mere poems can do no wonders.

Both the poems are presenting ecofeminism in a different tone but still the theme is concentrated saying the helplessness of nature and women. They reach out to God or eternity in their struggle but success is a void. This hopeless condition is reflected in both the poems, still the hope lingers while commemorating Kaviko Abdul Rahman's words in one of his Tamil poems, when he says the branches of the trees may be cut but the root is fixed under, which can make the branches to sprout again.

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