WOMEN-NATURE SIMILITUDE: AN ECOFEMINIST STUDY OF INDIRA GOSWAMI'S SELECT WORKS

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Abstract

Ecofeminism is the amalgamation of environmentalism and feminism. It explores the deeper connections between the oppression of women and nature, highlighting their entwined struggles. This paper argues that Indira Goswami's novels *The Blue-Necked God* and *The Man from Chinnamasta* articulate a culturally rooted ecofeminist vision that critiques the intertwined oppression of women and nature through religious, socio-cultural, and political lenses. The paper focuses on how the Western concepts of duality have been internalised within the Indian socio-religious structure to justify domination, and how patriarchal ideology rationalises its authority over women and nature. Drawing on the Sankhya philosophy's concept of *prakrti*, the paper aims to emphasise the interconnectedness of all life forms and Goswami's subtle resistance to patriarchal authority The paper argues that Goswami's works not only depict the shared suffering of women and nature but also proposes and analyses how embracing prakriti, a spiritually resonant and culturally embedded philosophy can be an alternative universal basis for gender liberation and the liberation of the environment.

Keywords: dualism; ecofeminism; ecological consciousness; environmental crisis; prakriti; women

INTRODUCTION

Ecofeminism is a theoretical framework that combines the principles of ecology and feminism. It is based on the unified cause of identity crisis that women and nature experience. It scrutinises and challenges the patriarchal oppression of women and the capitalist exploitation of nature. Francoise d'Eaubonne coined the term "ecofeminism" in her 1974 book *Feminism or Death*, referring to a women-led initiative that aimed to preserve the planet. She aimed to celebrate the intrinsic connection between women and nature, assigning empowering values through this term. By revaluing the connection between nature and women, she challenged the patriarchal, cultural, and economic exploitation that has historically undervalued both women and the environment. She also encouraged them to actively engage in environmental activism by fostering a sense of agency and collective responsibility for the planet. This foundational impulse to reclaim and revalue the nature-woman connection, has since evolved into a diverse and dynamic body of thought that critiques the intersections of patriarchy, capitalism, colonialism, and ecological degradation. Scholars such as Vandana Shiva and Maria Mies (2010), and Val Plumwood (1993), have emphasised how women's marginalisation parallels ecological degradation. While Western ecofeminism often critiques patriarchal dualisms rooted in Enlightenment rationalism and capitalist-industrial exploitation, South Asian ecofeminism draws upon indigenous cosmologies, spiritual traditions, and lived experiences of rural and marginalised women. Thinkers like Shiva and Mies emphasise ecological harmony, subsistence economies, and women's embodied relationship with nature as sources of resistance to both patriarchy and globalised development. This culturally grounded perspective enables a critique of domination that is simultaneously ecological, spiritual, and anti-colonial.

Ecofeminism calls for "an end to all oppressions, arguing that no attempt to liberate women (or any other oppressed group) will be successful without an equal attempt to liberate nature" (Gaard 1).

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Ecofeminism acts as a bridge between the movements of feminism and ecology and seeks to dismantle the oppression and subjugation of women and nature. In "Living Interconnections with Animals and Nature" (1993), Greta Gaard articulates that the basic premise of ecofeminism is that the "ideology which authorises oppressions based on race, class, gender, sexuality, physical abilities is the same ideology which sanctions the oppression of nature" (1). Ecofeminism is an evolving journey, continually exploring the hidden causes behind the systemic discrimination of women and their subjugation due to androcentric and anthropocentric ventures. It argues that women, who live in closer proximity to nature, bear a greater burden from the harmful, unselective, and exploitative practices inflicted on nature. Ecofeminism asserts the "fundamental interconnectedness of all life," and "offers an appropriate foundation for an ecological ethical theory for women and men who do not operate on the basis of a self/other disjunction" (2-3). Ynestra King's renowned declaration during the inaugural Conference, 'Women and Life on Earth: A Conference on Ecofeminism in the Eighties,' in March 1980 in Amherst, Massachusetts, USA gave ecofeminism a renewed impetus and broader dimension:

> Ecofeminism is about connectedness and wholeness ... asserts the special strength and integrity of every living thing... we are a woman-identified movement, and we believe we have special work to do in these imperilled times. We see the devastation of the Earth and her beings ... by the masculinist mentality which would deny us our right to our bodies and our own sexuality, and which depends on multiple systems of dominance and state power. (qtd. in Mohan 3)

This critique is mirrored in social ecology, which contends that the subjugation of certain human groups by other groups, also known as intra-human domination, directly leads to environmental abuse and exploitation. This perspective contends that human dominance over the environment is not an isolated form of domination but is intrinsically linked to hierarchical systems of oppression based on power, age, class, gender, and race. According to Murray Bookchin (1982), the exploitation of humans by other humans is the key to explaining the human exploitation of the natural environment. This domination arises from the construction of "Otherness", which involves categorising specific groups of humans and the natural world as distinct and apart from oneself. According to Plumwood (1993), the elevation of human reason" and its separation from emotion and nature underpins modern dualistic thinking. It has become the "key justification for human domination" (Cudworth 26-28). According to her, the construction of the "Other"—be it women, animals, colonised people, or the environment—is central to the logic of domination. Shiva (2009) challenges the technocratic, industrialised model of science and development, which marginalises women's ecological knowledge and subsistence practices. In the essay, "Women's Indigenous Knowledge and Biodiversity Conservation" (1992) Shiva stated:

> ... women are the custodians of biodiversity... they produce, consume, and conserve biodiversity in agriculture... women's biodiversity conservation differs from the dominant patriarchal notion ... Biodiversity for women is ecologically and culturally embedded. Diversity is reproduced and conserved through reproduction and conservation... the dominant worldview does not regard these as scientific because they do not emerge from the laboratory and the experimental plot ... and are carried out, not by men in white coats but by a village woman. (168)

Thus, Shiva emphasises ecological care and pluralism as a form of resistance to monocultures of knowledge and power, offering an inclusive, grassroots vision of ecological and gender justice.

These global theoretical insights can be enriched by engaging with Sankhya philosophy, especially its concept of *prakriti* (nature or primordial matter), which offers a non-dualistic, spiritually resonant alternative to Western Cartesian binaries. In Sankhya, *prakriti* is not passive or inferior to *purusha* (consciousness); instead, it is dynamic, creative, and foundational to all forms of existence. This indigenous ontology aligns with ecofeminist ethics by affirming the intrinsic value and interconnectedness of all life forms. Rather than reinforcing essentialist notions of femininity, it offers a cultural and philosophical framework for reimagining harmony, balance, and resistance against hegemonic systems. This theoretical confluence—between Western ecofeminist

critiques, social ecology, and South Asian spiritual philosophy—is reflected in Indira Goswami's *The Blue-Necked God* and *The Man from Chinnamasta* as she demonstrates how these frameworks are woven into narrative form, characterisation, and imagery. Her depiction of women's suffering within rigid religious institutions, their proximity to and identification with nature, and their subtle forms of resistance reflect an embodied, situated ecofeminism. Through her novels, Goswami critiques the sacrificial logic, whether of animals in ritual, widows in society, or nature under patriarchal capitalism, and proposes alternative cosmologies grounded in compassion, interconnectedness, and spiritual ecology. Thus, ecofeminism in her works is not merely a thematic concern but an epistemological and ethical stance.

Several scholars have previously explored Goswami's feminist and ecofeminist concerns, particularly in *The Blue-Necked God* and *The Man from Chinnamasta*. Shipra Singh (2020) foregrounds Goswami's ethical protest against animal sacrifice and her spiritual challenge to patriarchal ritualism. Neena Kishor (2016) examines how Goswami's women characters, Dorothy and Bidhibala are subjected to objectification and institutional control, while asserting their agency. Dr. Sadaf Shah and Dr. Sudhir Kumar (2019) offer ecofeminist readings of widows and degraded landscapes in Vrindavan, but primarily frame women and nature as parallel victims. Parishmita Bora and Chandan Jyoti Chutia (2020) offer a comparative feminist reading of Brahmin widowhood in upper-caste patriarchal settings. While these contributions provide valuable insight, they often treat ecological and gendered oppression as adjacent rather than interwoven. The present study builds upon and extends these critiques by integrating *prakriti* as a culturally embedded, non-dualistic principle within a South Asian ecofeminist framework. By synthesising philosophical ontology, narrative strategy, and symbolic imagery, this paper situates Goswami's work as a literary enactment of interconnectedness and spiritual ecology, offering an epistemic challenge to patriarchal and anthropocentric worldviews.

METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

This paper adopts a qualitative, interpretive approach rooted in thematic literary analysis and close reading, guided by an ecofeminist theoretical framework. The analysis is informed by both Western ecofeminist thought, particularly the works of Shiva (1992, 2009), Plumwood (1993), Mies and Shiva (2010), and Adams (2016), and indigenous Indian philosophical traditions, especially the Sankhya concept of *prakriti* as a life-affirming feminine principle. By integrating these perspectives, the study performs an intersectional reading of gender, ecology, and power in Goswami's *The Blue-Necked God* and *The Man from Chinnamasta*. The methodology focuses on textual interpretation of narrative strategies, symbolism, metaphor, characterisation, and mythic references to uncover how Goswami critiques patriarchal and anthropocentric structures. The aim is to identify how the novels construct a spiritually grounded ecofeminist ethic that resists domination and foregrounds interconnectedness. This approach also engages with South Asian ecofeminism's cultural specificity, challenging Western essentialist binaries by emphasising local cosmologies and pluralism.

EXPANDING THE LITERARY VISION: NARRATIVE VOICE, LANDSCAPE AND SYMBOLISM

One of the most powerful narrative strategies Goswami employs is the subtle use of third-person limited focalisation that draws readers into the lived experiences of her female protagonists without overtly moralising or dramatising them. In *The Blue-Necked God* (2012), for example, Saudamini's suffering is rendered not through overt external action but through psychological depth and spatial metaphor. When she observes the Annakut festival, where lavish food is offered to the deity while widows starve nearby, Goswami's narrator maintains narrative detachment and avoids explicit authorial judgement. Instead, the irony is built into the contrast between abundance and absence, leaving readers to perceive the hypocrisy of ritualised religion. This narrative restraint creates a more powerful emotional and ethical response, as it does not impose judgement but evokes it.

Similarly, in *The Man from Chinnamasta* (2006), Goswami adopts a third-person narrator with shifting focalisation, primarily through Dorothy and Bidhibala, enabling readers to access their emotional and spiritual transformation. The narration immerses us in Dorothy's disillusionment and Bidhibala's silent rebellion

without overt commentary. For instance, Bidhibala's refusal to allow her buffalo to be sacrificed is narrated with stark restraint, allowing her quiet resistance to resonate with moral clarity. Likewise, Dorothy's internal crisis and gradual detachment from her oppressive marital relationship unfold with subtle emotional shading. This multifocal technique enriches Goswami's ecofeminist vision by presenting agency in nuanced, often ambiguous forms, inviting the reader into a dialogic ethical space rather than a prescriptive one.

Goswami also employs landscape as a metaphor, especially in her portrayal of Vrindavan as a site of both spiritual sanctity and social decay. The dried Yamuna river, the artificial plastic flowers, and the polluted temple surroundings serve not only as realistic descriptions but as symbolic commentaries on the erosion of both ecological balance and spiritual sincerity. In contrast, *The Man from Chinnamasta* uses nature—particularly forests and rivers as sites of ethical clarity and resistance. This shift marks an evolution in Goswami's ecofeminist vision: from landscapes of trauma and desiccation to those of potential regeneration. This comparative use of nature illustrates how setting becomes an active participant in her critique of patriarchy and anthropocentrism.

Goswami's tone often features subtle irony. In *The Blue-Necked God*, the scene of widows begging for food near the temple coincides with festival excess, creating a striking contrast. Likewise, in *The Man from Chinnamasta*, characters like Alamghari, who revere goddesses but exploit women, are depicted with narrative detachment, letting the stark contradiction speak for itself. Goswami avoids didacticism and instead uses structural irony and symbolic juxtaposition to expose the moral dissonance hidden within patriarchal religion. Through these literary techniques such as focalization, symbolic landscape, irony, and emotional tone, Goswami goes beyond mere description to craft a multi-layered ecofeminist story where form becomes a tool of resistance.

CONTROLLING WOMEN THROUGH SACRED GEOGRAPHIES AND PATRIARCHAL MORALITY

Goswami, a powerful voice in Indian literature, has penned down her ecofeminist concerns through several of her writings, such as *Pages Stained with Blood* (2001), *The Man from Chinnamasta* (2005), *The Shadow of Kamakhya* (2001), and reflects the pain, resilience, and rebellion of her female protagonists within the broader context of ecological and socio-political discourse. Through a close textual analysis, Goswami's novels reveal how women's bodies become contested sites where cultural purity, religious ideology, and patriarchal authority intersect. King (1995) states that the masculinist mindset deprives women of their right to their bodies and their sexuality. They are not given the autonomy to choose their partners. Their existence is dictated by multiple systems of dominance and power imposed by the state. This is vividly reflected in Goswami's novels. In *The Blue-necked God*, Dr. Roychoudhury, the father, and Anupama, the mother, take Saudamini, the main protagonist, to Vrindavan because of her romantic involvement with a Christian boy shortly after the death of her husband. According to the prevailing orthodox societal norms, this is considered to be a grievous transgression. Saudamini's parents believe that the sanctity of Vrindavan will pacify her and help her find tranquillity and solace. Her displacement to the sacred city, believed to possess purifying and pacifying powers, illustrates how religious institutions are invoked to control female desire, aligning cultural sanctity with female obedience. While *The Blue-Necked God* explores institutional control through the figure of the widow in Vrindavan, *The Man from Chinnamasta* extends this critique to broader social hypocrisies around female autonomy and religious power, as seen in Dorothy's narrative. Dorothy Brown, an immigrant, comes to Assam with her spouse. She feels a sense of betrayal and isolation as her husband is engaged in a clandestine affair with a Khasi woman, who gives birth to their illegitimate child. However, he manages to avoid any scrutiny or interrogation. Nevertheless, when Dorothy takes a resolute determination and leaves him to become a follower of a Jatadhari man from Chinnamasta, it is misinterpreted as a lack of integrity. Though she broke the shackles of gender stereotypes by deciding to stay independent, she is not free from abuse and endures assault. A textual interpretation reveals that she is accused of an illegitimate affair with Jatadhari, reinforcing how Goswami uses characterisation and societal reaction to critique patriarchal surveillance. She does not get any peace of mind as people spread rumours that she is pregnant with Jatadhari's child. The patriarchal society regards her with

eyes of suspicion but allows her adulterous husband, the man in power, to roam about freely, without any restriction. Thus, her journey toward autonomy is reinterpreted by society as sexual deviance, showcasing how female nonconformity is pathologised. M.L. Thriveni (2012) speaks about the power of institutionalisation in perpetuating gender inequality. According to her, women are arbitrarily bound to adhere to traditional norms that do not apply to men. Men and patriarchal ideology establish such rules to make women their subordinates. Goswami's fiction thus unmasks how patriarchal ideologies use sacred geographies and moral codes to subordinate women, situating gendered oppression within larger cultural ecologies. Through such portrayals, she anticipates Shiva's (1992) ecofeminist call to recognise how women's struggles are often embedded within the defence of cultural and ecological autonomy.

RITUALISED EXCLUSION: PATRIARCHY, SACRED SPACE, AND THE EXPLOITATION OF WOMEN AND NATURE

In *The Blue-Necked God*, Goswami mirrors Saudamini's suffering with the town's deteriorating environment, reflecting the contention that patriarchal societies exploit both women and nature, creating a layered ecofeminist critique of patriarchal control. Through a thematic and symbolic analysis, Goswami vividly portrays a poignant depiction of Vrindavan and brings to light the dire circumstances of the poor and helpless widows. These women are deprived of adequate sustenance, forced to endure extreme hunger, and lack proper housing, residing in unhygienic and squalid conditions. This juxtaposition, as revealed through thematic and spatial analysis, sets the suffering of widows who are socially marginalised and deprived of dignity, against the city's supposed spiritual sanctity. Goswami captures their desperation and highlights the systemic neglect they endure with the plea, "Give us some donation to keep us alive. You people live to eat, but we need to eat something in order to live" (Goswami 22). The religious backdrop of Vrindavan, associated with divine femininity, becomes ironically complicit in the subjugation of actual women. They are coerced to chant Radha and Krishna "as loud as they could even if they were on the verge of choking" (23), reducing them to instruments of ritual, devoid of agency. The people of Vrindavan celebrate the Annakut festival, a festival of abundance, on the first lunar day of the bright fortnight. During this celebration, people offer gratitude for Lord Krishna's beneficence, and the priests serve abundant food in the name of God, yet there is scarcely anything left for the impoverished, hunger-stricken, and famished widows. Despite their diligent efforts and optimistic expectations, they are cruelly turned away by the merciless temple priests. It exposes religious hypocrisy as temple priests feast while starving women are cast aside. "Go, go away, all you old woman! It is no good sitting here like this" (58). It is the hegemony of the patriarchy that denies women access to power. Men hold all the power in societies and are unwilling to relinquish it.

A similar pattern of exclusion and domination recurs in *The Man from Chinnamasta* when Dorothy is prohibited from entering the temple because of her gender. Her mere presence near the sacred site provokes alarm among the male authorities, reinforcing the patriarchal monopoly over religious space and power. Such institutionalised marginalisation reflects what Mies and Shiva identify as the conceptual alignment of women with nature, both seen as irrational, passive, and subordinate. "We also understood that women all over the world, since the beginning of patriarchy, were also treated like 'nature', devoid of rationality... Like nature, they could be oppressed, exploited and dominated by man" (Mies and Shiva 22). Goswami's fiction thus critiques how religious and cultural systems legitimise the dual exploitation of women and nature, placing both at the mercy of masculinist control under the guise of tradition and sanctity.

SYMBOLIC LANDSCAPES OF DECAY: GENDERED SUFFERING AND ECOLOGICAL COLLAPSE

Shiva argues that the "act of living and of celebrating and conserving life in all its diversity - in people and in nature - seems to have been sacrificed" (Shiva, Staying Alive xii). This assertion resonates deeply with Goswami's portrayal of Vrindavan, as evident in her symbolic landscape and ecofeminist layering in *The Blue-Necked God*. The novel opens with a description of the degraded state of Vrindavan, which is symbolic of the plight of the widows residing there. "Saudamini turned to look and saw forests of dust-laden trees and thick, prickly bushes. The branches and twigs... had dried up and looked like thin, dry fish bones. The purple blossoms on these

plants looked like artificial flowers... stuck on the dried-up branches" (Goswami 3). This landscape of lifeless vegetation mirrors the widows themselves—socially discarded, deprived of nourishment, and reduced to skeletal existence. Just as the trees stand barren, the women are stripped of vitality by patriarchal abandonment and spiritual neglect. The transformation of Vrindavan's once lush greenery into a desolate terrain speaks volumes about human disregard for nature. "The water was starting to dry up and there was a round mass of sand in the middle of the river" (26). The river water, once sacred, is dwindling and it has become the repository for deceased animals and fish, reflecting broader ecological collapse. Instances of unseasonal rain, the drying of the Jamuna River, and a decrease in the size of forests are all examples of anthropogenic damage and climate change. This is poignantly captured in the line: "Indeed, the rain has suddenly burst upon us, completely out of season" (30). These stark images parallel Shiva's lament: the "death of nature" is evident in the surroundings, the "earth is rapidly dying: her forests are dying, her soils are dying, her waters are dying, her air is dying" (Shiva, Staying Alive xii). Goswami's narrative thus renders visible a dual crisis—ecological destruction and gendered suffering—underscoring how patriarchal structures devalue both women and the natural world in the pursuit of power and control.

INSTITUTIONAL PATRIARCHY AND SACRED VIOLENCE: WOMEN AS OBJECTS IN RITUAL AND DOMESTIC SPACES

Plumwood (1993) critically analyses the "dualism" found in the Western rationalist tradition. This dualism assigns masculinity to concepts such as culture and reason, while femininity is linked to emotions and primitiveness. The attributes associated with masculinity are deemed superior, while those tied to femininity are considered inferior. This relegation of human qualities to primitiveness, animality, and femininity poses a disservice to women, nature, and the overall quality of human life. It also justifies the domination of men (masculinity) over women (femininity). In *The Blue-Necked God*, the *paandas*, Hindu priests of Vrindavan, perpetrate physical violence against the widows of the city. They exploit the widows both sexually and socially, stripping them of agency and dignity. Goswami, through symbolic imagery and metaphor, compares the young men to butchers and bereaved widows to animals. "Like butchers examining animals before buying them, the young men would make these young widows strip off their clothes in order to examine their bodies thoroughly and make sure that they were without any blemishes" (Goswami 8). This eco-symbolic imagery, drawn from close textual analysis, starkly illustrates the dehumanising treatment these widows endure. It illustrates how women are reduced to objects, appraised for their utility, and discarded when deemed unworthy.

A similar critique appears in *The Man from Chinnamasta*, where Bidhibala is humiliated during a kumara puja ceremony. She is degraded when Shambu, the priest, attempts to estimate her age based solely on her physical features: "The girl seems to have crossed her twelfth birthday. Let's check her hands, feet and chest" (Goswami 47). This reflects an insight into the abhorrent and disgraceful idea of orthodox patriarchy. It reveals how orthodox patriarchy transforms sacred rituals into platforms for the surveillance and control of the female body. Another instance of institutionalised patriarchy is seen when a helpless woman is mercilessly assaulted by her husband. Goswami recounts an episode in which a woman brings her son to Jatadhari for treatment. When she falls at the feet of the ascetic, her alcoholic husband pounces on her, grabs her by her hair, and abuses her. The husband represents institutionalised patriarchy, viewing women as 'others' while asserting his dominance as 'self'. She knows that her husband is an alcoholic and does not contribute to the family, but she refrains from confronting him due to the constraints imposed by her sense of social obligation. The man, despite being a drunkard and negligent husband, retains power within the conventional system, using it to verbally abuse, assault, and harass his wife, as well as making lewd comments about the relationship between Jatadhari and Dorothy. This instance stands as a glaring example of institutionalised patriarchy wherein women, silenced by social obligations, endure persistent violence. Goswami's portrayal adds another dimension to this critique. Dorothy becomes a victim of sexual violence during her stay at the Darbhanga House: "Two ruffians pounced on her, ripping open her nightgown. Before Dorothy even knew it, her sensibilities were violated" (67). This narrative episode, when examined through an ecofeminist lens, exposes the everyday dangers women face, even in

supposedly sanctified spaces, demonstrating how Goswami narratively fuses sacred space with systemic violence. Religion, which claims to elevate and revere women, is portrayed as complicit in their subjugation. Alamghari, the temple priest, exemplifies this duplicity: a priest who worships the goddess with devotion, yet simultaneously abuses vulnerable women. Sashiprova, a widow in Vrindavan, often compared to the "lovely jasmine flower of Braj" (68), resides with Alamghari to protect herself from the sexual assailants of Vrindavan. She hopes that her stay with him will ensure that she receives a dignified funeral rite after her death. However, he takes advantage of her helplessness and manipulates her to satisfy his sexual cravings. Thus, she falls prey to the very man she looks up to for protection. Another such victim in the hands of Alamghari is Mrinalini, who tells Saudamini about the fateful night when Alamghari stripped her of her dignity. "One day, he asked me to disrobe completely in front of him and I did. He scrutinised my body thoroughly in the light of the lamp. Then he put out the lamp and went and slept in his own bed" (59). This paradoxical treatment is emblematic of a religious framework that exalts women to divine status only to subjugate them the next moment. These examples expose the paradox within religious structures that revere women as goddesses while simultaneously violating their bodily autonomy. Goswami's portrayal of Alamghari's religious devotion alongside his sexual predation is laced with a dark irony that exposes the dual moral code at the heart of patriarchal religiosity. The very religion that venerates women also facilitates their oppression, reflecting a deep-seated hypocrisy. A woman is glorified as a mother, as a wife, as a sister, as a daughter, and even as a goddess, but this reverence is limited to their respective roles. She finds herself confined to the boundaries of these roles. As a mother, she is owned by her son; as a sister, she is owned by her brother; as a wife, she is owned by her husband. She is the pride of the family until she conforms to the rules of patriarchy. Her independence is rooted in her adherence to her specific role. She lacks the autonomy to control any of her patriarchal counterparts. Her physical and psychological needs are outright denied.

According to Adrienne Rich, "lies, secrecy and silence have been used to perpetuate the exploitation of women" (qtd. in Kheel 259), and it is the same logic that is applied to the exploitation of all natural resources. It is not an individual endeavour, but a collective undertaking that can bring a positive transformation, an alternate way of life that ecofeminists insist upon. Ecofeminists argue that to undo such destructive consciousness that dominate contemporary culture, we must dismantle the interconnected systems that support gender and ecological oppression. This transformation, as highlighted through interpretive literary analysis, is not merely a personal act but a collective and cultural reimagining, and a rejection of patriarchal binaries in favour of relational, life-affirming values. The vision ecofeminism offers is not utopian, but necessary: a world where women and nature are no longer 'others' to be mastered, but co-inhabitants in a shared, sustainable existence.

EMBODIED CONNECTIONS: WOMEN, NATURE, AND EMOTIONAL ECOLOGY

In *Staying Alive* (2009), Shiva asserts that "Women in India are an intimate part of nature, both in imagination and in practice. At one level, nature is symbolised as the embodiment of the feminine principle, and at another, she is nurtured by the feminine to produce life and provide sustenance" (37). This perspective highlights the interconnectedness and mutual nurturing between women and the natural world, challenging the hierarchical and exploitative views prevalent in patriarchal societies. Goswami echoes her ecofeminist vision through narrative strategies that blend emotional focalisation, natural imagery, and symbolic tone. In *The Blue-Necked God*, the third-person narration is subtly filtered through Saudamini's internal experience, allowing readers to witness the emotional landscape of widowhood and exile intimately. When she interacts with Radheshyami, the narrative lingers on the latter's sudden collapse: "The woman looked up like a startled deer, and then she collapsed on Saudamini's chest, just as the soft mud of a river bank erodes and falls into the river" (Goswami 167). Here, the similes drawn from the natural world—startled deer and riverbank—convey tenderness, fragility, and a poignant loss of self, suggesting that nature offers not only metaphors for emotional states but also a site of empathy and relationality. Furthermore, it is clear that Saudamini only found solace in nature's objects. This imagery paints a poignant picture of emotional vulnerability, trust, and the

intertwining of human emotions with natural elements. It reflects the novel's exploration of the profound connections between women and the natural world, emphasising their shared experiences of fragility and resilience. It aligns emotional trauma with ecological fragility, inviting an ecofeminist reading where nature is not a passive background but a mirror to feminine suffering. “Saudamini sat down under a flowering tree near the temple. The spot was quiet and not so crowded ... She had hoped that she would be able to spend some time alone here” (53). As depicted in these lines, nature is her only refuge where she feels a true sense of belonging. It is in nature that she finds peace of mind and forms a profound connection with it. Nature is thus portrayed not merely as background, but as an active participant in the shaping of feminine subjectivity. Her emotional alignment with nature is further revealed in the line, “Her body jerked restlessly like a wounded bird” (71). This metaphor of the bird reinforces the shared experience of injury, confinement, and longing for release that marks both woman and nature under patriarchal domination. Ultimately, the novel’s denouement reinforces this ecofeminist reading. When Saudamini learns of her father’s abandonment, she surrenders herself to the river Jamuna, becoming one with nature both symbolically and literally. This act of merging with the river signifies a return to the feminine principle, dissolving individual suffering into a larger ecological and spiritual continuum. Goswami’s use of elemental imagery aligns with Shiva’s (1992, 2009) argument that women and nature are co-sustainers of life, both subject to systemic exploitation and yet capable of profound renewal and resistance. The tone is delicate and restrained, avoiding overt sentimentality, and instead conveying quiet devastation. The natural world becomes a site of relational meaning, empathy, and mourning, foregrounding what ecofeminist theory sees as shared injury and shared resilience between women and nature under patriarchal conditions. While Goswami often portrays nature as a site of solace and emotional refuge, she resists romanticising it as a passive feminine ideal. Nature, here, is not an idyllic retreat but a participant in collective suffering, reinforcing the ecofeminist argument for shared vulnerability rather than essentialist harmony. Goswami thus complicates the woman–nature bond, presenting it as relational rather than inherent.

MYTHOPOETICS AND FEMININE ECOLOGICAL STEWARDSHIP

Janis Birkeland (1993) argues that to create better societies, we have to change “our perception of our “selves” in relation to nature, or, as deep ecologists would have it, expanding our sense of identification to encompass all life, perhaps even “Gaia” itself” (16). This holistic reimagining of selfhood aligns with ecofeminist values, where the boundaries between human and non-human life are fluid and mutually sustaining. Goswami reflects this perception through her mythopoetic narrative strategy, invoking traditional cosmology to articulate ecofeminist care. By invoking Hindu cosmology and devotional myths, she underscores the sacred and symbiotic relationship between women, animals, and the natural environment, emphasising their role in environmental conservation and animal welfare, which contributes significantly to maintaining ecological balance. In one myth, Yashoda, the foster mother of Lord Krishna, is seen as making gifts for cows and giving birth to nature by planting trees and flowers, respectively. These actions not only bring solace and comfort to the people but also alleviate their sorrows and grief. They exemplify selfless nurturing that benefits humanity without any selfish motives.

> The deep and thick forests ... Yashoda made a gift of cows, and the famous Radhabagh, where Radha herself had planted trees ... and ... Nikunja Bon, where lovely white flowers seemed to stoop down and bend over to embrace the precious soil of Braj! These bushes blossom with sparkling flowers resembling the nupur ... A single blossom of this flower, it was said, could transform acute sorrow and grief to a feeling of intense pleasure. (Goswami, *The Blue-Necked God* 69)

This eco-mythological reading shows how the imagery fuses femininity, flora, and emotional healing, suggesting that nature, when nurtured by women, becomes a source of collective wellbeing. The mention of the *nupur*, a delicate anklet that evokes femininity and sacredness, reinforcing the idea that women’s interactions with nature are both spiritual and transformative. Through this symbolic interweaving of myth and ecology, Goswami constructs a vision of environmental stewardship rooted in feminine care and devotion. Yashoda and Radha emerge not only as mythic figures but as ecofeminist

agents whose selfless acts restore ecological and emotional balance. In this sense, Goswami embodies Birkeland's call for a redefined selfhood, one that identifies with all life forms and enacts a sacred duty of protection and nourishment.

ECOFEMINIST ETHICS: INTER-SPECIES KINSHIP AND EMBODIED COMPASSION

In addition to exploring women's oppression, Goswami also draws attention to animal suffering, thereby extending her ecofeminist ethic to the non-human world. Her work on animal rights and feminism helps illuminate this dimension. She argues that though animals are an integral part of the Earth's ecosystem, humans consider them as "other" and use them in their favour. Animals have become relentless casualties under the control of men and their power. According to Kheel (1993), "The conception of nature as an object for "Man's" use was carried to an ultimate extreme by Cartesian philosophy. According to Descartes, since animals were lacking in "consciousness" or "reason," they were mere machines that could feel no pain" (247).

Goswami empathises with the pain of animals and challenges dehumanising philosophies. Through eco-symbolic characterisation, she exposes the deplorable abuse they receive from people. She also establishes that women are closer to understanding the pain inflicted upon the animals. Ecofeminism adheres to Simone de Beauvoir's assertion that "women have a particular affinity with the natural world due to their common exploitation by men" (qtd. in Cudworth 102). According to Connie Salamone (1982), women's social practices of caring for others make them more likely to oppose practices of harming non-human animals than men. Both Josephine Donovan (1990) and Adams (2016) have proposed a new basis for animal rights theory by arguing that women have a sense of obligation towards animals that stems from their praxis of caring. Norma Benny contends that many women can empathise with the sufferings of animals because they have some common experiences of oppression (qtd. in Cudworth 110). Goswami's ecofeminist critique extends pointedly to include non-human suffering, foregrounding the often-overlooked ethical proximity between women and animals. Through her depiction of inter-species relationships, she expands the ecofeminist frame to include empathy and care beyond the human. In *The Man from Chinnamasta*, the relationship between Bidhibala and her buffalo, Mena, is rendered with a tone of reverence and moral clarity. The narrator's unembellished recounting of Bidhibala's resistance heightens the emotional force of her silent defiance. Mena is not described as livestock but as a companion imbued with personhood, underscoring Goswami's subversion of the ritualistic logic that treats animals as expendable.

Goswami's use of tone is stark and purposeful, there is no sensationalism, only moral urgency, which forces the reader to confront the brutality normalised by custom. Through Bidhibala's character, Goswami constructs an eco-spiritual ethic that replaces domination with care, and ritual with compassion, thereby aligning with ecofeminist calls to dismantle the intersecting hierarchies that govern gender, species, and belief systems. She requests Ratnadhar to release her buffalo: "Please let this buffalo go so I won't have to watch it being sacrificed ... I've seen it grow up, seen its grey tufts turn black. When I bring her food and call 'Mena' she runs up to me" (Goswami 104). Bidhibala's care for Mena transcends species boundaries, affirming a form of kinship that stands in direct opposition to the patriarchal culture of domination. A similar instance is seen when an old woman intervenes in a sacrificial ritual, exclaiming, "A little while ago it was eating grass and leaves. Why did you kill the helpless soul? ... take my head as well" (93). Their bond with the animals suggests an alternate worldview where animals and nature are not dominated; rather, they are seen as nurturers and caregivers. In aligning women's care with animal welfare, Goswami dismantles the hierarchical binaries of man/woman and human/animal. Her characters enact a form of resistance rooted not in abstract activism, but in embodied compassion and everyday acts of refusal. The narrative thus extends ecofeminism's ethical scope by illustrating how women's intuitive and affective relations with animals offer the potential for a more inclusive, justice-oriented ecological paradigm, one that privileges kinship over control and empathy over exploitation.

PATRIARCHY, PROFIT, AND THE PLUNDER OF NATURE: DEEP ECOLOGICAL CRITIQUE

The exploitation of animals for religious and economic gain parallels the ecological damage inflicted by anthropocentric greed. Goswami

builds on this continuum of violence to explore deeper philosophical questions about humanity's place within nature, drawing her narrative closer to the ethics of Deep Ecology.

According to deep ecologists, man's failure to identify and empathise with nature and all its beings arises from "human chauvinism or anthropocentrism that has led to our separation from nonhuman nature" (Birkeland 29). Goswami's *The Man from Chinnamasta* powerfully illustrates this ideology through the character of Alamghari and others who embody patriarchal dominion over both women and nature. Alamghari's actions are emblematic of how patriarchal structures commodify the Earth and its beings to fulfil selfish desires. Women, like the Earth, are subjected to both physical and emotional exploitation. Saudamini witnesses an incident where she sees some people digging the earth and extracting its resources for personal gain. "What is he digging for?... Snakes... Then he will go around, letting the snakes into people's homes. Later... he himself will go as a snake charmer, find the reptiles, and take money as reward..." (Goswami 62). This incident reflects how nature is weaponised to create fear and dependency, turning the sacred into a source of profit. Saudamini also witnesses a man peeling the skin off a rare-coloured snake, hoping to make extra money by selling it. It is quite astonishing to see how men not only rob women and the earth physically, but they also exploit the emotions of innocent people.

Another day, she notices a man near the temple selling items: "medicines ... tiger oil, crocodile skin, the bones and bile of various fish ..." (11-12) produced from dead animals that have been killed, to maximise his profits. Goswami highlights the inequities inflicted upon animals and women by men, who believe they are superior and possess unrestricted power. These examples underscore how the nonhuman world is reduced to mere resources, violently extracted and consumed in service of male-driven greed. The exploitation of animals mirrors the societal mistreatment of women and the economically marginalised, such as the *Radheshyamis*, who the Paandas routinely extort under the guise of religious ritual. Goswami draws a compelling parallel between these human injustices and the suffering of animals, most poignantly illustrated through the image of bullocks burdened under extreme weight: "necks of poor bullocks almost touched the ground under sheer weight" of the people and their luggage (10). Goswami's narrative thus critiques not only ecological exploitation but also its embeddedness within a broader patriarchal and capitalist framework. She aligns with deep ecologists in advocating for a profound shift in human consciousness. Birkeland (1993) asserts that overcoming anthropocentrism requires a personal transformation—a "cultivation of a biocentric perspective," where one recognises that "to harm nature is to harm Himself" (29).

In Goswami's vision, the path to social and ecological justice lies in dismantling the hierarchies that permit such exploitation. By depicting the interconnected suffering of women, animals, and the Earth, she calls for a reimagined ethics of care, empathy, and interconnectedness, foundational to ecofeminist thought and deep ecological philosophy alike. Goswami's depiction of the commercialisation of animals—through scenes of vendors selling "tiger oil, crocodile skin, the bones and bile of various fish" (Goswami 11–12)—employs a cataloguing technique that mimics consumerist rhetoric. The flat, unemotional tone with which this list is presented serves as a form of narrative irony: it underscores the normalisation of violence while emotionally unsettling the reader. The enumerative style, building a list of grotesque items without pause, functions as a literary overload—mirroring the excesses of market-driven exploitation. More strikingly, this commerce unfolds within or near sacred spaces, exposing the disjuncture between spiritual ideals and material greed. Goswami uses this juxtaposition of the profane and the sacred to reveal how patriarchal capitalism infiltrates both ecosystems and religious institutions, converting animals and devotion alike into tradable commodities.

UNDOING DUALISMS: SHARED MARGINALISATION OF WOMEN AND NATURE

Ecofeminism sees destruction not only as the "perceptual distancing and isolation of different people from each other, but also the habits of dualistic thought that separate human society from nature" (Lahar 96). It is this human/nature dualistic thought that undermines "our relations to the world around us and to that which is embodied and unmediated within ourselves" (96).

In *The Man from Chinnamasta*, Goswami illustrates how this mindset manifests in acts of ecological violence. Men are depicted as digging the earth, disturbing the natural elements in their natural habitats, harming and killing animals without showing any signs of mercy, and escaping because they are blessed by power, while animals and other non-human elements are pushed to the periphery as they are considered to be "others". Through such depiction of instances, Goswami successfully portrays how women and nature become helpless under the curb of power. Since ecofeminism equates women with nature, the violation of nature and its resources can also be seen as the mistreatment of women.

In *The Blue-Necked God*, a similar ecofeminist critique emerges. The natural world and the widows of Vrindavan share similar fates; the women suffer from insufficient nourishment and have grown frail and emaciated, resembling the depleted state of the Yamuna River. Both women and river have been reduced to desolate forms by systemic disregard and exploitation, echoing a shared fate of abandonment and decay. In response to such dualisms, ecofeminism calls for a radical reimagining of human-nature relationships. Lahar (1993) envisions ecofeminism as fostering "an integrated- but not reductionist- perceptual experience and conceptual view of nature and society. It seeks to move beyond a purely "socialist" analysis... or a purely "ecological" analysis ... It also aims to establish an ethic of responsible action" (107). It seeks to transcend narrow ecological or socialist critiques by offering a holistic framework grounded in an ethic of responsible action. In Goswami's works, this ethic surfaces through acts of compassion, resistance, and solidarity between the human and nonhuman worlds. By highlighting the interconnected suffering of women and nature, Goswami's ecofeminist vision urges a dismantling of hierarchies and the cultivation of empathy as the basis for sustainable coexistence.

INCLUSIVE ECOFEMINISM AND DEEP ECOLOGY: REIMAGINING MASCULINITY

Oladosu told Global Citizen, "When we talk about ecofeminism, it is not something that the male folks should be afraid of. Ecofeminism is gender-neutral; it is for both males and females" (Rodriguez 2022). This inclusive vision is echoed by Gaard, who asserts that women alone cannot "save the earth" and they need the "efforts of men as well" (Gaard 5). Both statements challenge the misconception that ecofeminism is exclusively a women-centred movement and reaffirm its universal relevance. This inclusive framework aligns closely with the principles of Deep Ecology, which also transcends anthropocentrism and individualism. According to the environmental philosophy of Deep Ecology, the "self" should transcend individualistic and egoistic perspectives. Deep Ecology states that developing a sense of the self requires further maturity and growth, an identification that goes beyond humanity to include the nonhuman world (Nair 24). Rayson K. Alex states that this maturity implies the ability to relate to the immediate environment, shedding several cultural preconceptions and values. A person attains full maturity when he or she realises "self-in-Self," where "Self" stands for organic wholeness (qtd. in Selvamony 59). David Landis Barnhill further notes that deep ecologists value "life as a whole" and do not prefer "one particular human or animal to be the individual possessor of rights" (qtd. in Barnhill and Gottlieb 7). This ontological realisation that all existence is interconnected finds powerful expression in Goswami's portrayal of Jatadhari. Like the deep ecologists, he believes that all the entities of nature are holy, and are to be revered, and thus lives in intimate communion with nature, worshipping water, earth, and all human and non-human elements. His worldview illustrates an ontological shift from domination to communion, from separation to unity. Through Jatadhari, Goswami offers a vision of ethical coexistence, rooted in reverence and interconnectedness. He symbolises the ecofeminist and deep ecological ideal: a being who transcends rigid identities and aligns his life with the rhythms of the natural world. This portrayal underscores that ecological responsibility and spiritual maturity are not gendered, but human imperatives. Goswami's use of Jatadhari as a narrative device is especially significant. His dialogic speeches, inserted into the narrative at key moments, break the flow of storytelling with deliberate philosophical reflection. These didactic interjections might appear disruptive, yet Goswami uses them to offer a male voice aligned with ecofeminist values, without overshadowing the female characters. Jatadhari's rhetoric which is calm, reasoned, and spiritually grounded, represents an alternative masculinity that refuses violence and domination. His role as a philosophical guide is

not framed as authoritative but as part of a dialogic ethic, where transformation arises from reflection, not coercion. Goswami masterfully balances ideological exposition with emotional resonance, ensuring that Jatadhari's message emerges organically from his lived worldview, not as mere abstract instruction. This blending of spiritual discourse and narrative emotion is rare and reinforces Goswami's vision of ecofeminism as inclusive, ethical, and relational.

Men's resistance to pro-environmental attitudes and behaviours may stem from environmental consciousness being generally associated with femininity. Men must reassess the significance of the environment and challenge the dominant forms of masculinity. They may struggle to challenge environmental destruction because of their internalised superiority, still, they can overcome this and become involved in ecofeminism and cultivate qualities such as gentleness, care, and non-dominance (Birkeland 21–23). Cultivating attributes such as care, gentleness, and non-dominance is not a relinquishment of masculinity but a redefinition of it through an ecofeminist lens. Despite their historical complicity in the domination of nature, men can actively participate in ecofeminist movements by rejecting hegemonic ideologies and embracing values rooted in interdependence and compassion. Through the character of Jatadhari, Goswami challenges the binary division between men and nature. Men, too, are ecologically conscious and thus should not be excluded from ecofeminism. During Jatadhari's visit to the Kamakhya Temple, he witnessed the ritualistic slaughter of a buffalo and was deeply unsettled by its alarmed eyes. As a true devotee of the environment and to end this age-old tradition of animal sacrifice, Jatadhari decided to organise a rally against it with the help of his ardent disciple Ratnadhar. Throughout the journey of his attempt to abolish animal sacrifice, he had to undergo several hindrances from different priests. The priests who oppose Jatadhari's attempt to abolish animal sacrifice are representatives of the anthropocentric attitude that prioritises the lives of humans over animals and nature. Jatadhari's willingness to sacrifice his own blood for the cause powerfully affirms the ecofeminist ideal of "life as a whole," a concept central to Deep Ecology and eco-spirituality. His actions dismantle the myth that ecological responsibility is the domain of women alone. Instead, he represents an inclusive ecofeminism that invites men to renounce dominance and embrace relational ethics. According to Janis Birkeland, there is "hope. Men and women in Western societies are increasingly seeking liberation from their Patriarchal programming. All sexes can work to affirm the values of caring, openness, nurturing, and non-defensiveness and the possibility of creating societies in harmony with all living beings" (Gaard 54).

PRAKRITI AS PARADIGM: ECOFEMINISM, INDIGENOUS PHILOSOPHY, AND THE ETHICS OF INTERCONNECTEDNESS

Goswami thus portrays how anthropocentrism and androcentrism very often prove to be mutually reinforcing in destroying harmony around the world. Her vision aligns with the ecofeminist proposition that "when men and animals live in harmony, the world will become a paradise" (Goswami 180). While Deep Ecology offers a radical critique of human exceptionalism, Goswami also turns to indigenous Indian philosophy to provide an alternative worldview—one rooted not in separation, but in the unity and balance of Purusa and Prakrti. In *Staying Alive* (2009), Shiva explores the Indian notion of *Prakriti,* which means the feminine principle or life force. *Prakriti* stands distinct from the Western-gendered concept, which equates the feminine with passivity. The term "feminine principle" does not mean any gender-specific property but "the principle of activity and creativity in nature, women and men" (Shiva 50). This statement urges both women and men to redefine their identities and connections with others and the natural world in a manner that does not involve hierarchies. According to Indian cosmology, Purusha-Prakriti is a "duality in unity... every form of creation bears the sign of this dialectical unity, of diversity within a unifying principle, and this dialectical harmony between the male and female principles and between nature and man, becomes the basis of ecological thought" (Shiva 40). Shiva proposes that *Prakriti* is an alternative universal basis for gender liberation. "Nature, both animate and inanimate, is thus an expression of Shakti, the feminine and creative principle of the cosmos; in conjunction with the masculine principle (Purusha), Prakriti creates the world" (Shiva 38). While Goswami draws on the concept of *prakriti* to articulate an indigenous ecofeminist ethic, she does not present it as biologically fixed or limited to femininity. Her

interpretation aligns with Shiva's notion of *prakriti* as creative energy, present in all beings, thus subverting gender essentialism. Yet, the risk of romanticising women's spiritual connection to nature remains, particularly in a cultural context where such links have historically been used to justify exclusion from civic life. Goswami navigates this tension by positioning women not as naturalised caregivers but as philosophical interlocutors who reinterpret their role in spiritual and ecological terms. Her narratives offer no utopian escape, but rather a site of dialogical possibility where coexistence arises from ethical recognition, not innate identity.

An ecofeminist perspective posits the necessity of a new cosmology and anthropology that acknowledges that life in nature, including human beings, is sustained by mutual care, affection, and cooperation. By fostering collaboration and attentiveness, we can effectively honour and safeguard the diversity of all living organisms and their cultural manifestations, which serve as genuine foundations for prosperity and contentment. "Ontologically, there is no divide between man and nature, or between man and woman, because life in all its forms arises from the feminine principle" (Shiva 40). It is the acceptance of this interconnectedness that can lead to the rejection of hierarchy and domination based on gender and power. The acknowledgment of unity in duality and the "dialectical harmony between male and female principles and between nature and men" is essential to embody an alternate view of life. The recovery of this feminine principle is essential for "ecological recovery and nature's liberation, for women's liberation and for the liberation of men who, in dominating nature and women, have sacrificed their own human-ness" (Shiva 53). The acceptance of this philosophy of life, based on inclusiveness, will recover humanity and create a new wholeness that transcends any form of oppression based on patriarchy or power. Ecofeminism calls for the "rejection of power-over" and an alternative worldview that emphasizes "the value of diversity, interdependence, sustainability, cooperation, and renewal" (Vance 134) and the awareness of the interrelatedness between humans and non-humans. To create a world devoid of any domination and destruction, one must overcome hierarchy and commit to knowing the ecology of our immediate environment and how our actions impact the environment, both the human and non-human world.

Indira Goswami's *The Blue-Necked God* and *The Man from Chinnamasta* articulate a nuanced ecofeminist vision not merely through thematic content but through deliberate literary craftsmanship. Her use of third-person focalisation, often filtered through emotionally vulnerable female protagonists, invites readers into the inner landscapes of marginalisation and grief. Goswami's tonal restraint, subtle irony, and elemental symbolism, such as rivers, animals, and temple spaces, serve to connect ecological devastation with bodily suffering in ways that transcend simple metaphor. By positioning nature not as a passive backdrop but as a moral and emotional agent, Goswami complicates human-nature binaries. Her characterisation, especially of women like Saudamini and Bidhibala, and men like Jatadhari, reimagines the roles of ritual, belief, and agency in spiritual and ecological terms. The structure of her narratives, which shift between sacred sites and everyday suffering, reinforces a world where ecological and gender violence are systemically entwined, yet potentially reparable through relational ethics. Rooted in *prakriti* and Indian cosmological thought, Goswami's ecofeminist storytelling becomes a mode of philosophical resistance, rejecting domination-based epistemologies and replacing them with a vision grounded in interdependence, care, and ontological balance. Her novels thus do not offer utopias, but ethical reorientations, calling on readers to perceive women, animals, and the Earth not as resources to be controlled, but as co-sustainers of life. In bridging literary form with spiritual ecology, Goswami affirms a South Asian ecofeminism that is at once culturally rooted and globally resonant, one that positions narrative as an instrument of both critique and compassionate reimagining.

CONCLUSION: ECOFEMINIST VISION AND ETHICAL REORIENTATION IN GOSWAMI'S WORKS

Goswami's *The Blue-Necked God* and *The Man from Chinnamasta* articulate a complex ecofeminist vision through their narrative structure, characterisation, symbolic landscapes, and interspecies empathy. Rather than merely representing women and nature as parallel victims of patriarchal control, Goswami constructs a literary and philosophical space where the boundaries between human and non-

human, sacred and profane, suffering and resistance are blurred and interrogated. She presents female characters who complicate the binaries of victimhood and resistance. Dorothy's decision to leave her husband, for instance, can be read both as moral defiance and emotional withdrawal. Bidhibala's silence, too, may function as spiritual surrender or as a non-confrontational ethic of refusal. Saudamini's immersion into the Jamuna is not framed as a final defeat but as a symbolic reintegration into a cosmic continuum that transcends pain. Similarly, her depiction of men like Jatadhari challenges dominant forms of masculinity and opens a dialogic space for inclusive ecofeminism rooted in compassion and interdependence. These portrayals resist linear interpretations of agency. Goswami acknowledges that resistance can be ambiguous, partial, and deeply personal—a view that enriches ecofeminist discourse by embracing nuance over prescriptive roles. Through narrative techniques such as third-person focalisation filtered through emotionally burdened female characters, Goswami evokes not just social critique but emotional ecology. The spiritual decay of sacred geographies, the ritualised violence embedded in religious and domestic spheres, and the plunder of ecological life all emerge as expressions of institutional patriarchy. Her symbolism, such as the dried Yamuna, skeletal trees, and mutilated animals, serves not only aesthetic or descriptive purposes but functions as active agents in the novel's ethical discourse.

By invoking indigenous cosmologies, particularly the Sankhya concept of *prakriti*, Goswami shifts the discourse away from Western dualisms. Her philosophical grounding rejects the binaries of man/woman, nature/culture, and human/animal. *Prakriti* becomes a symbol of balance, activity, and creative force, not confined to feminine essentialism but offering an inclusive ethic of relationality. This framework allows for a reimagining of masculinity and ecological responsibility beyond gendered boundaries. Goswami's ecofeminism is thus not utopian but reconstructive. It critiques hierarchical and exploitative systems while offering alternative paradigms rooted in care, reciprocity, and spiritual ecology. Her literary vision aligns with the deep ecological call for dismantling anthropocentrism and affirms a worldview in which all life forms are intrinsically valuable and interconnected. Ultimately, Goswami's works demand a perceptual shift, from dominance to kinship, from ritualised exclusion to relational ethics. They challenge readers to rethink not only the treatment of women and nature but also the foundational cosmologies that legitimise such treatment. Her ecofeminist ethics offer a pathway to ecological and gender justice grounded in cultural specificity, spiritual depth, and literary innovation.

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