

Nature as a Subaltern: An Eco-feminist Overview in Kamala Markandayas *The Coffer Dams*

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Abstract

The labyrinthine concept of subalternity is prominent in all Third world nations. The non-European countries specifically Asia, Africa and South America were the target of European settlers. The European settlements in these countries were strengthened with the passage of time. These Europeans explored these countries meticulously and overpowered them tactfully. They conquered the lands along with the civilians. The natural resources and indigenes were appeased and then enraptured in the name of development. This development concept dismantles the strength and oneness of the colonized and tagged them as subalterns. Nature, poor people in general and women in particular are subject to such subalternity. The subordinate position of these is the willingness of the oppressors. *The Coffer Dams* documents the retreat of nature as a subaltern. Nature being the worst victim of subalternity is speaking at the loudest. This paper attempts to accentuate the retaliation of the subalterns. Eco-feminism is instrumental in this paper for demarcating the subaltern issues.

Keywords Subalternity, Third World, Oppressors, Nature, Eco-Feminism.

Introduction

The Coffer Dams is a gripping novel written by Kamala Markandaya which has been enthralling its readers for years. This novel depicts the bounteous rewards of nature. Here we see a dichotomy which exists between the Occident and Orient. The impact of colonial culture and post-colonial outcomes are crystal clear in this novel. The concept of subalternity has become a familiar term for the colonized countries. The term subaltern means 'something subordinate'. Subordination is the outcome of undue domination in any field of action. People can be belittled in the name of gender, color, class, caste, creed and culture. Nature too is belittled in the same manner. Antonio Gramsci articulated the term Subaltern to express the delirium of inferior ranks. The term was used to designate the mass that were non-identical with the hegemonic power. Subaltern was coined by Antonio Gramsci in his notable work "*Cultural Hegemony*". In his work, the term was symbolically used for those who were oppressed in the society and had no locus-standi. Intellectuals and scholars from different parts of the world have considered this sensitive issue seriously. Writers like Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Eric Stokes, David Arnold, Ranjit Guha, Gyan Prakash, Goutam Bhadra and Dipesh Chakravorty have categorically explored and examined the subaltern issues. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's work *Can the Subaltern Speak* paved a new path in subaltern studies. The Eco-feminist enthusiasts ventured into the subaltern studies, as they themselves have experienced subalternity.

Eco-feminism as a theory and praxis has emerged with bold reasons to emancipate the subalterns in all forms. Nature as a subaltern is a major issue which is discussed and debated by the Eco-feminists. Different natural hazards such as global warming, parched lands, water cycle imbalance and impure air are some of the features of nature's subalternity. In current world scenario we come across many such developments projects which catalyze such debacles. Megha Patkar, a social and environmental activist has raised her voice against a dam project which is a debatable topic. The Narmada Bachao Andolan by Medha Patkar is a glaring example of protest against Sardar Sarobar Dam. Arundhati Roy, an eminent writer and environmentalist has also given voice to the protest through her writings. The current Pollavaram Dam issue of Odisha is also the outcome of

such futuristic development projects. This paper aims to highlight the natural outcomes of unnatural development plans.

Aim of study The paper aims at analysing the subaltern state of nature through Ecofeminist perspective. It demonstrates anthropocentric intervention in natural system which leads to debacles.

Review of Literature

A theory is always analyzed on the basis of the works of its contemporary writers. The present research work depends upon different ecofeminist writers sharing the same ideologies. Rigorous research has been made on ecofeminism in last ten years. I reviewed books, dissertations, journals, articles and interviews by Nadine Gordimer, Kamala Markandaya and ecofeminist writers between 2009-2019. I have reviewed the works of writers like Raymond Williams, Jonathan Bat, Leslie Marmon Silko, Linda Hogan, Karen J Warren, Greta Gaard, Mary Mellor, Judith Plant, Val Plumwood, Rosemary Redford Ruther, Maria Mies, Mary Daly, Vandana Shiva, Swarnalatha and Murali Shivaramkrishnan which have contributed much towards the foundation of Ecofeminism. Mary Mellor's work *Feminism and Ecology*, published in 1997 displays the oppressed state of women and nature in a comprehensive manner. It speaks of various dualisms which disrupts the society and environment. The work has been reviewed and cited in the dissertation.

Healing the Wounds (1989) of Judith Plant is filled with practical analysis of social and ecological problems. It advocates ecofeminism and its practicability which is quite helpful for the research. Mary Daly's series of literary works in general and *Gyn/Ecology* in particular made my grip on this subject stronger. Especially the text *Gyn/Ecology* (1978) exposed me to heinous sexist practices such as Chinese foot binding rituals and African genital mutilation. It also gave me a better idea about the European witch burning. While going through the text, I could correlate the subject with my research topic that is the identity crisis of nature, women and indigenes. The ethos of ecofeminism is well reflected in Ivone Gebara's text *Longing for Running Water* (1999). It speaks about the idea of the earth based spirituality and inter connective web of life. It helped the dissertation remarkably. Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva's literary work *Ecofeminism* (1993) speaks of various environmental movements in India and across the globe. It states about the women protestors in Chipko movement and their eco-consciousness which gives an Indian perspective of ecofeminism. The book stands relevant to this research. Vandana Shiva's *Staying Alive* (1988) discusses the harmonious living of every creature. It gives some ideas about speciesism which interferes with the existence of the entire living world.

Ecofeminism and globalization (2003) written by Heather Eaton stands as an eye opener to various global issues which fragment social ecology. These texts have been reviewed to further this research. Vandana Shiva's *Staying Alive* (1988) discusses the harmonious living of every creature. It gives some ideas about speciesism which interferes with the existence of the entire living world. *Ecofeminism and globalization* (2003) written by Heather Eaton stands as an eye opener to various global issues which fragment social ecology. These texts have been reviewed to further this research. Silko's popular fiction *Ceremony* and Linda Hogan's *Solar Storm* (1994) projects the American perspective of ecofeminism which gives a western concept of ecofeminism to this dissertation. Works like Val Plumwood's *The Mastery of Nature* (1993) Rosemary Redford Ruther's *New Woman, New Earth: Sexist Ideologies and Human Liberation* and Karen J Warren's *Ecofeminist Philosophy* have been reviewed to justify the objectives of the research. Gwyn Kirk's article, *Ecofeminism and Environmental Justice: Bridges Across Gender, Race, and Class*, published in 2009 speaks about many post colonial and ecological issues which is attuned to the research topic.

Greta Gaard's *New Directions for Ecofeminism: Towards a More Feminist Ecocriticism*, published in 2010 elucidates the protocols of ecofeminism and dissects the term ecofeminism through this essay and explains its importance. It also proves to be a great help to widen the ambit of this research. The article *Beyond Destruction: possibility of a New Paradigm of Knowledge* by Tomislav Krznar published in the year 2012 speaks of bioethics. A recent article authored by Alyson Pompeo-Fargnoli, *Ecofeminist Therapy: From Theory to Practice* published in 2018 reflects ecofeminist praxis. It is one of the latest works which is reviewed and cited in the dissertation. Recent publications in newspapers and magazines regarding various environmental and global issues have updated the research to a greater extent. Especially the research articles published in the "Xplore" segment of *The Indian Express* made the study inter-disciplinary. Recent development in the Issues like global warming, ozone layer depletion, pollution, population and health hazards widens scope for further research. After reviewing the related literature between 2009-2019 in this field I have come to the conclusion that no work has yet been done comparing the works of Nadine Gordimer and Kamala Markandaya in the light of ecofeminism and identity formation. Hence this dissertation undertaken by me explores and establishes the similarity regarding identity crisis and identity formation across borders and continents, when viewed with an ecofeminist

lens. *Woman and Nature: The Roaring Inside Her* (1978) by Susan Griffin is a path breaking source of ideas which expands the knowledge on Ecofeminism. Anne Karpf's book *How Women can save the planet* published in 2021 examines the climate crisis due to anthropocentric intervention. *Waste : One Woman's Fight Against America's Dirty Secret* (2020) by Catherine Coleman Flowers demonstrates oppressive measures of human beings on nature as a whole and animals in particular.

Analysis

The storyline of *The Cofferdam* girdles around the construction of a dam. For the construction of Cofferdam a set of British engineers landed in a jungle of the southern part of India. The very intention of constructing a dam by modifying the path of a river is nothing but a business deal. Industrial expansion and economic development has rendered human beings inhuman. Tampering with nature for the cause of development has become a common phenomenon. Disruption in the natural system is the highlight of this novel which is analysed using ecofeminist theory in this paper. Though eco-feminism has been cultured since few decades, but it is still in its nascent stage. It has enveloped a series of issues which needs to be eyed upon. French feminist Francoise d' Eaubonne coined the term Ecofeminism in 1974. The theory advocates inseparable connectivity between women and nature. Since then rigorous research has been done on different social issues by applying ecofeminism as an applied theory. Numerous books, article, journals and chronicles have been written down after making thorough research on connectivity of nature with living beings. Men who are also a part of the living world forget that their own survival depends upon the well-being of the entire earth. According to Maria Mies, man is the integral part of nature and cannot stand different from it. In her words:

The earth doesn't belong to the men, men belongs to the earth. All things are connected like the blood which unites one family. Whatever befalls the earth befalls the sons of the earth. Men didn't weave the web of life; he is merely a strand of it. Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself. (*Ecofeminism* 105)

Man considers the pronoun 'I' when the question of survival arises whereas woman considers the pronoun 'my' in the same situation. Nature being the mother of all sustenance is losing its own sustainability. This degradation of nature is caused due to human brain's intervention in natural mechanism. The idea of simplifying life amplifies nature's complexities. This paper throws light on eco-feminism and the state of subalterns in general and nature as a subaltern in particular. Development strategies of modern men lead to doom. Vandana Siva explains the concept of development in the following lines of the text *Ecofeminism*:

Dams, mines, energy plants, and military bases- these are temples of the new religion called 'development', a religion that provides the rationale for the modernizing state, its bureaucracies and technocracies. What is sacrificed at the altar of this religion is nature's life and people's life. The sacraments of development are made of the ruins and desecration of other sacred, especially sacred soil. They are based on the dismantling of society and community, on the uprooting of people and cultures. Since soil is the sacred mother, the womb of life in nature and society, its inviolability has been the organizing principle for societies which 'development' has declared backward and primitive. (*Ecofeminism* 98)

This paper examines the common factor of feminine traits which is evident in both woman and nature. The central female character in *The Cofferdams* novel Helena affirms the eco-feminist ideas. Helena's benign attitude towards nature as a whole is most arresting. In this novel, we will sight many such instances where nature is nauseated with rancid intentions. Mechanization has mal-functioned the entire natural system. Throughout the world we come across many such incidents, where construction of dams, bridges and water reservoirs have turned apocalyptic. Trying to divert the natural path of the water bodies by destroying forest and exploding mountains is a very dare devilish activity. In few attempts of man, we can see the desirable changes of development whereas; in maximum cases the magnitude of failure is unfathomable. Due to such human conducts nature undergoes certain irreversible changes.

The preclusive chapters of the novel picturized the man's world. A group of technicians try to figure out the dam. Howard Clinton was the chief designer and the master mind of the dam assisted by a group of men with various specialties. Bob Rawling was the chief engineer whereas Henderson was the turbine specialist. Apart from them Leferbe was the head supervising the soil mechanics laboratory. Todd was the electrical wizard followed by Galbraith. Besides these people,

Mackendrick is also a leading member in the project. These group of men were assigned the building of the Coffey Dam. After a lot of haggling in the Indian executive level, Clinton was assigned with task. Clinton being a veteran in this field was confident enough about his master plan. These Europeans were audacious about their upbringing and their higher breed. The typical colonial concept of civilization got reflected in their behavior. Their attitude towards the localite was much depreciating. The Europeans abhorred the indigenes and outcasted their skin texture and body structure. At the same time the encaging jungle, the gurgling sound of the river and the shrilling sound of the animals penetrated the ears of these civilized men giving them a notion of savagery of primitive age. *The Coffey Dams* explains:

By night it was different. The jungle crept back, closing in as the shadows of the huge trees fell across the line where the clearing merged into scrub, and advanced and deepened; and the men grew restless, listening to the yelp of jackals, or the soft furtive sounds of frightened deer, and lurched out to herd together in the canteen or cinema, or the shanty-town-style saloon bar, where the familiar noise and thick blue air, and in the end alcohol, restored the illusion of England. (*The Coffey Dams*6)

The group of European technicians had to work with Indian labour force. These workers were quite hard working. They were barbaric in the eyes of these Europeans. The chocolate colored skin, their edgy jawline, flatten nose and prominent eyebrow bones made them look different from these white people. They were considered more apes than human beings. Helena the beautiful and tender wife of Clinton was rather blessed with a mature understanding. She is a lady of compassion. The very backdrop of jungle inveigled her thoughts. She tried to be defensive when any of her European companions chastised the poor aboriginals as subalterns. Her empathy gets well reflected when in initial days of their stay at India she tries to pacify the frustration of her husband. According to the conversation of Helena and Clinton:

Helena, his wife, had no such blocks. Was it, he wondered, because she was half his age? When he asked her she laughed. 'It's nothing to do with age. I just think of them as human beings, that's all.' He frowned at the equivocal statement, and she added seriously, trying to help: 'You've got to get beyond their skins, darling. It's a bit of a hurdle, but it is an essential one.' (*The Coffey Dams*6)

Helena's sense of maturity to deal with drudgeries is scattered throughout the novel. She finds herself one with Mother Nature. The nourishment of the Mother Nature to the entire living world cannot be compensated by any mechanical development. The European colony, Helena was residing in was well designed with all comfort. Despite being in her comfort zone she speculated about the day to day condition of the people who lived in the jungle. She always looked for a plea to escape into the dense jungle and to know its culture. Every bit of it attracted her. She was completely annoyed to come across the remarks of Mackendrick towards the Indians. The sense of pity he expressed to see the poor people of India were something uncommon to Helena. In Mackendrick's view regarding Krishnan, the Indian technician:

Mackendrick glanced at the Indian with something like sympathy. In a way he understood-better than either of Englishmen-the pulsing jealousy and pride that a poor nation could feel and transmit to its nationals: the pride of an ancient civilization limping behind in the modern race, called backward everywhere except to its face and underdeveloped in diplomatic confrontation-a euphemism of sheltering intent but dubious minting and no less humiliation. (*The Coffey Dams*12)

In the mid of such criticism the team of workers had already defined their protocol of the dam 'how to obstruct and deviate the path of the river?' By constructing this massive dam, they intended to facilitate the poor country and felicitate their own country. The huge collection of machines contributed the execution of the dam. Those machines were used without giving a second thought. According to Helena, this mechanization is ruining the natural world. As per Maria Mies' analysis:

Sovereignty thus shifted from the soil and soil-linked communities to the sovereignty of the nation state. Laws of nature and their universality were replaced by the laws of a police state which dispossessed peoples of their original homelands, to clear the way for the logic of world market. In this way organic communities give way to slum dwellers or urban and industrial jungles. Development builds new 'temples' by robbing nature and society of their integrity and their soul. Development has converted soil from sacred mother into disposable

object to be ravaged for minerals that lie below, or drowned beneath gigantic reservoirs. The soil's children, too, have been made disposable; mines and dams leave behind wastelands and uprooted people. (*Eco-feminism*106)

The shifting of 'Laws of Nature' has turned recurring incident which occurs in every nook and corner of the world. Once again the same is witnessed in this novel where the nature is being smitten by the construction of a dam. Clinton, the lead of the project was overpowered by various plans regarding the execution of the dam. For Clinton, his work was a passion but his passion for Helena made him bring her to such a distant land. The world of men keeps women away from their workplace because they have a predefined notion that women are not meant for their workplace. Rather women are meant to give solace when they return from their workplace. Men have created these ideologies since antiquities. This phenomenon of creating ethics for women is still agile in present day world. Masculine power has overpowered feminine senses. Heather Eaton opines about human ethics lucidly as follows:

The idea that men create ethics and write moral codes is not just a throwback to the middle ages but also reflects modern times. Modern rationalism is actually masculine rationalism and is alive and well among us. (*Eco-feminism and Globalization*167)

Helena was not exempted from such moral codes. She was interrogated for her actions like her visits to rural belt. Sometimes she was restricted and was made immobile by her husband's command. But she at times refrained herself from such dictates. She strived hard to minimize the difference between the colonizers and the colonized. All her attempts were futile. The colonizers rejected the existential reality of the colonized. The civilizing operation of the colonizers got an uncivilized outlet. In usual sense in order to clean the dirt one has to get a bit dirty. If the cleaner is afraid of dirt, then cleaning is not desirable. Same is the case with Clinton and his companions. Helena being an exception was foregrounded and sensible. She comprehended the pidgin of the natives and embraced them with all humanity. This fragment of the paper reflects the ecofeminist ideologies of Helena. An ecofeminist is the one who perceives oneness among all.

Thudding of the huge machines, growling of the Lorries, and yelling of the workers was a sight which dissatisfied Helena. Helena occasionally paid her visit to the construction site of her husband. She was displeased to see the explosions of mountains by dynamites. This was something like poking a nose in nature's business. In the words of Rachel Carson:

The balance of nature isn't a status quo; it is fluid, ever shifting, in a constant state of adjustment. Man, too, is part of this balance. Sometimes the balance is in his favour; sometimes- and all too often through his own activities- it is shifted to his disadvantage. (*Silent Spring* 215)

Helena even tried to convince her husband for establishing unquestioned integrity of Mother Nature. But no one heeded her. Lois Ann Lorentzen justifies the moral code concept in the following lines from the text *Ecofeminism and Globalization*:

The goodness of woman was predefined as synonymous with humility, silence, self-effacement, tenderness and openness. Women are good when they keep quiet and go about their work according to their roles established by the patriarchal society. This is why we are afraid to make mistakes and act badly. We are also afraid we will be judged by this established morality. In the end, we are afraid to become human beings who risk their lives in the midst of all other's lives; people who have to learn that life is full of attempts, victories, set back, death, as well as experiences of freedom and love. (*Eco-feminism and Globalization* 168)

Helena's frequent escape to the distant land was discarded with resentment of Clinton. Clinton's anger got channelized through his forceful and aggressive intimacy with Helena. The patriarchal norms get asserted by any means, either by force or by wit. The freedom of expression of women is curtailed by confining them to ethics. Negation of which is considered as 'acting badly'.

The concept of development and progress relies on the idea of capital accumulation even at the cost of others life. Here, the term 'others' include many salient features. The 'others' are the oppressed ones. The oppression ingests the lives of the poor aboriginals in general and poor women in particular. Children and animals are also no exception to such othering. The subordination of these

helpless sufferers tags them as subalterns. For man, development needs the sacrifice of subalterns. 'Without pain there is no gain' is the catch phrase of these development ambassadors. They forget the fact that development is possible by including everyone, not by excluding some. The colonial power in the name of development has subjugated the entire supportive world, and germinates subalternity. In the text *Ecofeminism and Globalization*, the writer Heather Eaton asserts the capital accumulation concepts of development. According to her:

The concept of development was clearly based on capital accumulation and commercialization for the generation of profits. This implied not only the creation of wealth but also the creation of poverty and dispossession. This Eurocentric (and later American and Japan centered) model of development legitimized colonialism and imperialism and the economic choking and neo-colonialism that took over nation after nation in the south. This submerged all other civilizations, all other cultures, all other historical experiences. It ignored highly developed systems of philosophical and religious thought and asserted that the western paradigm was a so-called civilizing force in a supposedly uncivilized world. (*Eco-feminism and Globalization*84)

This very project dam of Clinton was never-the-less is an eye catching instant of above argument. Despite such debates and discussions, these developmental works are perpetual. The nocturnal scenario of the river bank is completely different from the day time view. During the night hours when machines and men are in a state of exhaustion, the river was agile and audible. The grumbling sound of the river becomes louder in the dead hours of night. It becomes even louder and conspicuous, when it is given attention. The swishing sound of the river was a cause of horror in the hearts of the European workers. In the text *The Coffe Dams* the spectacle of river is awful. It explains as follows:

By night the river was stronger. Its soft purl penetrated all his defenses, earplugs and closed door and ticking clock, and hung in heavy oppressive garlands above him until he cursed again and reached for the tablets that made him dream sweetly of the traffic that roared past his door all night at home in England. (*The Coffe Dams* 26)

Clinton in a state of deep slumber dreamt either of Helena or the project dam. In both the dreams river was the background. He could hear the gentle gurgle juxtaposed with that of the rustling silence of the forest. The roaring sound raised the anxiety level of his heart. He was mostly wrestling with divergent thoughts related to the execution of the dam. He visualized a year to cut the diversion channels, and another consecutive year for the construction of the Coffe Dam. He also estimated another additional couple of years for the construction of the main Dam. Blueprints were set to execute the plan; flags were dug at eastern point of the west bank of the river, where the main dam would span the torrents. The bulging river was looking furious. Kamala Markandaya picturized the ferocity of the river with precision:

It ran deeply here, this river which two thousand men and ten thousand tons of equipment had so far assembled to tame. On either side the banks rose in a steep incline, lichen-covered slopes whose weathered surfaces belied the intractable nature of the igneous rock layers below. Time, the slow aeons, that passed in a flash of the cosmic calendar, had hardened and toughened these layers, fusing them at places into granite walls through which the river cut its way on its own measured, implacable course. Here, in the jagged clefts left by that ancient encounter, the waters eddied and tumbled, churned into foam and spume of a blinding whiteness where they cascaded down. Here, too, before the cataracts and between these granite flanks, rising from the solid rock of the river bed two hundred feet below through its over layers of sandstone and gravel, Clinton planned his dam. He had first to alter the course of the river: block its flow at the upstream coffe dam, and deflect the rising waters into a channel cut in the east bank and curving in a wide arc from the upstream barrage to a point north of the downstream coffe where the river would resume its natural flow. In this still water, the motionless unnatural lake created between the coffers, the main dam would grow. (*The Coffe Dam* 29)

Helena's initial excursion to the upriver village was solo. She had the courage to explore a distant land all alone. This adventure was to have an uncluttered impression on her own. In her opinion, if she was escorted by any guide, she could not see the real rural life. Rather she would be shown a spectacle, which would have a colonial prejudice. Being a pedestrian she sauntered on the rough narrow roads. Gradually, she slipped into the area of the natives. She was amused by the

unusual scenario. The scantily fed dogs loitering around, pigs and chickens pacing to and fro was something which got a childlike smile on her face. The pot bellied children were simpering at the strange sight of a foreign lady. Their brown colored shimmery skin was a nature's miracle for Helena. Within a short period of her arrival at the village the parents of these children emerged with question marks on their faces. The adults were also half dressed indifferent and identical with the children. Helena was much pleased to witness the primeval life of the simpletons. Their life is additively integrated with that of the nature. The rare of the rarest quality is discovered in Helena, is her oneness with nature. Despite her sophisticated and civilized origin she did not hesitate even a bit to mingle with the aboriginals. This reflects the fact that women are compassionate and empathetic no matter whatever is their origin. She felt strange to see her husband's inclination towards the mechanical world. According to Helena, intervention in the natural system in the name of growth and development is unacceptable. The group of engineers, technicians, and workers at construction site baffled her. The heap of stones and clay which got cluttered here and there was a sight of repulsion. It was as if nature was strangled, and mutilated deliberately. Helena feels that nature is raped of her dignity and left in an indefensible state. This ill treatment of nature is considered as taming nature.

The present paper circumnavigates around the topic of dam. A dam is meant to enhance the development quotient of an underdeveloped country. The dam will constrict the river and regulate the water flow by diverting its normal and natural path. This diversion is to expedite the commercial agriculture and industry. This profit motivated projects backfire most of the time. As Vandana Siva observes:

The desacralisation of rivers and their sources has removed all constraints from the overuse and abuse of water. Projects of controlling rivers, of damming and diverting them against their logic and flow to increase water availability and provide 'dependable' water supplies have proved to be self-defeating. The illusion of abundance created by dams has been created by ignoring the abundance provided by nature. The role of the river is recharging water sources throughout its course, and in its distributive role in taking water from high rainfall catchments through diverse ecosystems has been ignored. When dams are built by submerging large areas of forested catchments and river waters are diverted from the river course into canals, four types of violence are perpetrated on the river's water cycle:

1. Deforestation in the catchment reduces rainfall hence reduces river discharges and turns perennial flows into seasonal flows.
2. Diversion of water from its natural course and natural irrigation zones to engineered 'command' areas leads to problems of water-logging and salinity.
3. Diversion of water from its natural course prevents the river from recharging ground water sources downstream.
4. Reduced inflow of fresh water into the sea disturbs the freshwater-sea water balance and leads to salinity ingress and sea erosion. (*Staying Alive*177)

Unmindful experiments many a times give unsought results. And such results are beyond human control. To play with water bodies is an unaffordable business for human civilization. In the novel *The Coffe Dams* we see the exact disintegration in the natural path of river. When a river flows, it distributes its water resources in different areas in proper proportion. Starting from the fountainhead to surcease of the river has its due course of action. That action gets hampered with human conduct. According to Vandana Siva's opinion:

The cause of the water crisis and the failure of the solutions both arise from reductionist science and development working against the logic of the water cycle, and hence violating the integrity of water flows which allows rivers, streams and wells to regenerate themselves. The arrogance of these anti-nature and anti-women development programs lies in its belief that they create water and have the power to 'augment' it. They fail to recognize that humans, like all living things, are participants in the water cycle and can survive sustainably only through that participation. Working against it assuming one is controlling and augmenting water while over exploiting or disrupting it, amounts at one point to the breakdown of the cycle of life. That is why in water management, it is imperative to think and act ecologically, to think like a river and to flow with the nature of water. (*Staying Alive*174)

Intermediating in nature's preinstalled designs uninstall the entire life cycle. Clinton and his team have exactly done the same to the water cycle. They have endangered the lives of the poor people who were dependent on that river for survival. Life cycle depends upon the perfect equilibrium of the earth which mainly depends on water cycle. Water is the elixir of life, which germinates and supports life in all its forms. Excessiveness or inadequateness of it can cause ravage. This is but an undeniable oracle for the entire sentient world. This was having an indelible imprint in Helena's mind. The sustainability of human being is paramount instead of growth and development. Vandana Siva criticizes the scientific development programmes. She considers it irrationality which leads to the expropriation of nature's dignity. In her words:

Modern reductionist science, like development, turns out to be a patriarchal project, which has excluded women as experts, and has simultaneously excluded ecological and holistic ways of knowing which understand and respect nature's processes and interconnectedness as science. (*Feminism and Ecology* 120)

Nature should be dealt with dignity instead of imposing subalternity. The over imposed subalternity on nature can flush all kinds of subordination in one solid swipe. The writer Vandana Siva elucidates the water crisis concept in her text *Staying Alive*:

Water circulates from seas to clouds, to land and rivers, to lakes and to underground streams, and ultimately returns to the oceans, generating life wherever it goes. It is a renewable source by virtue of endless cyclic flow between sea, air and land. Despite what engineers like to think, water cannot be 'augmented' or 'built'. It can be diverted and redistributed and it can be wasted, but the availability of water on earth is united and limited by the water cycle. Since it is volatile, and since most of its flow is invisible, in and below the soil, it is rarely seen as being the element that places the strictest limits on sustainable use. Used within the limits, water can be available forever in all its forms and abundance; stretched beyond these limits, it disappears and dries up. Over-exploitation for a few decades or even a few years can destroy sources that had supported life over centuries. (*Staying Alive* 174)

All the justification regarding the natural imbalance is evident in the novel *The Coffey Dams*. Eventually the Coffey dam would do the same harm to the water cycle. The construction of the dam was in its full swing. Every participant of the project both Indians and Europeans were well versed with the tenacity of their job. The roaring and ever growing river was just like a wild elephant that a group of trainers were trying to tame. No matter what may be the number of human trainers, but a tusker is always a game planner and a game changer. In a gamesomely swing, or a casual fling, or a mighty string can toss the trainers in the air because elephant, as a trainee, has no human impulse. Similarly mountains and rivers have their own existential tendencies. It can't be tamed and reduced to profit providing factors. Such profit minting projects causes great human loss. In the words of Rachel Carson:

To have risked so much in our efforts to mould nature to our satisfaction and yet to have failed in achieving our goal would indeed be the final irony. Yet this, it seems, is our situation. (*Silent Spring* 214)

Now nature has started retaliating. Though man is often intimidated by nature's reply but unfortunately cannot pacify its grumbling. The Coffey Dam has already started showing its reverse outcome. The planners are panic stricken. Abrupt increase in water level has destroyed the hard work of everyone. The river started to spread its physical ambit dashing and splashing itself on chopped edges of the mountains and hilltops. Toppling the pillars and sliding the walls the waves glided all human safety boundaries. Swallowing the river banks it has already established its position with all its might. People were swept away, structures got capsized and lands got submerged. This humongous retreat of nature left a handful of human beings alive in a state of helplessness. Among them were the central characters Clinton and Helena, who were simply mute spectators trying to escape the catastrophe. This tragic end is the outcome of their tragic flaws.

Conclusion Sometimes subalternity of nature results in abject retaliation. The Subalterns should not be underrated. So also nature, is corollary of repression. Kamala Markandaya a keen observer of nature has always adhere to reality. In her works nature is always a mute background which is moulded and manipulated irrationally. Manipulations in the natural system leads to disintegration, she has interweaven eco-feminist theory intricately in the Coffey Dams. For

the sustainance of the sentient world, we need a healthy earth. For balanced life of everyone development programs should be rational. Hence it is the prime responsibility of human civilization to retrieve natures glory. Thus Eco-feminism as a synthesis has emerged to dispel sub-alternity.

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