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## A LITERARY APPROACH TO NATURE CONSERVATION

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### ABSTRACT



The interconnectedness of women and nature is seen portrayed in mythical narratives and epics of ancient period. The concept of 'Mother Earth' and the relationship of women and nature used to be a strong representation of ancient literature over the centuries. Every living being is related to one another according to the eco feminist school of thought. Since ages nature and women are seen intertwined, as both are considered as the victims of oppression. This idea has been discussed by many writers and scholars of different ages in their literary works. The South Indian poet and activist Sugathakumari who has been at the forefront of variant environmental and feminist movements is one such personality who is a real worshipper of nature. This paper attempts to analyze nature's conflict and the threat confronted by our environment through Sugathakumari's poems and her prominent role in a remarkable people's movement 'Save Silent Valley'.

There had been numerous articles and readings based on the ecological system and the cult of womanhood. Studies that discuss this topic in terms of religion culture and politics is also a part of environmental studies dealt by the scholars of different ages. Ecology is a multidisciplinary concept which leads to diverse thoughts and studies as ecocriticism, ecopolitics, ecoaesthetics, literary ecology and so on. Thinkers, environmental historians and scholars have seen to be adopted an interdisciplinary enterprise which is labeled as 'environmental humanities'. Many environmental humanities' initiatives have seen to be emerged in the last few years. Behind every venture that should be a strong force to kindle the light of success. Perhaps these forces would become a strong element of motivation to the successive generations. As

stated earlier the linkage of women and environment is seen represented even in religious texts and mythologies by renowned scholars and poets. This union is seen to be a powerful representation of bondage between two stunning creations of divinity. This union is seen to be carried over since ages, when woman herself becomes the defender of nature.

Indian women poets preferred to be subjective and most of these poets are seen to be influenced by many feminist movements. Sugathakumari, The well acclaimed South Indian poet, environmentalist and activist depict the existential problems of modern women and also her sheer protest against the exploitation of nature by man. Her emotions and feelings are powerfully represented in her works. Her contempt towards the selfishness and

ruthlessness of humans is bravely brought out through her words. While scanning the earlier works of Sugathakumari a reader could sense her revolt against the maltreatment of women and male domination. For her, nature also is oppressed. Nature is a victim as well. A victim of ascendancy. Her later poems seriously discuss the injustices taking place against the environment.

Being an environmentalist her role in variant ecological movements is noteworthy. Of this, 'Save Silent Valley Movement' is illustrious. Her earlier poems confer the beauty of love. In her 'Urakkamillathoru ratriyil' (On a sleepless night) describes the true nature of love. She continues to love even though love is thwarted, because for her mere existence is to love regardless of condition. This love or worship is witnessed in her poems on the life of nature.

Our world has viewed many social and ecological movements which aimed at safeguarding nature. 'Save Silent valley' is a public movement (1973) perceived as one of the remarkable people's movement in Kerala. An evergreen tropical forest Silent valley, in the Palakkad district of Kerala witnessed a social movement which stood strongly for the immaculate evergreen forest. River Kunthipuzha flows across the valley from North to South. The State Government announced the construction of a dam across the river Kunthipuzha. The technical experts' suggestion of generating hydel power from the river became a threat to the flora and fauna. Although there were no protests initially, a gradual uprising of the public could be seen when the venture captured the attention of many environmentalists. Sugathakumari's role in this Save Silent Valley protest is worth mentioning. Her powerful words reflected her strength and vigor against the hazards which gravely affected the environment.

A journey through her poems reveals her love and affection, anxiety, sympathy, protest, hope etc towards nature. Her words are sharp and transparent which tend to enlighten the common man. Her 'Marathinu sthuthi' ('Ode to a tree') used to be an opening prayer to the

campaigns of Save Silent Valley' movement. The ardent admiration towards trees is seen in her words. She says that the trees consume poison and emits fresh air inevitable for life. In spite of all the atrocities done by the humans it still defend our earth. But all the good deeds done to this earth becomes pointless when men become discourteous and continue to exploit nature.

'Silent Valley' was yet another work of Sugathakumari written in 1985, after Silent Valley was declared as a National Park. She expresses her sentiments and emotions towards this evergreen forest in this poem. A sense of satisfaction is seen reflected here. Initially, the poet considers Earth as her mother but at some point she realizes that she becomes the mother who is to care for her daughter, the nature. Here, as stated before women nature relationship is employed. Human beings tend to destroy the nature ruthlessly. This ruthlessness is unforgivable according to the writer. A bird expresses its anxiety in its language which conveys the callous actions of humans. Earth is not only for humans, it is a shelter for all the living beings, the creations of Almighty. Her 'Ningalen lokathe enthu cheithu' ('What have you done to my world?') mirrors this idea of the author. In her poem 'California Kadukalil' ('In the forests of California') she expresses her ardent love and concern for her own homeland when she stands amidst variant species of trees which are unfamiliar to her. Here she portrays the secure feeling she experience just as she feels in her native soil when she finds herself with the trees in California. This implies that to value nature becomes indispensable for the tranquil existence of mankind. The essence of forests is the same everywhere. No matter which species the trees or plants belong to. They all possess the same purity.

There are many activists who are the propagators of the significance of nurturing the Mother earth. Many eco feminists view that the split that exists between the nature and culture could be healed only by the feminine instinct to foster nature's processes. Emergence of urbanization resulted in positioning man at the

centre and all the elements of nature is meant to be conquered by man. As a result nature was exploited to a great extent. When we go through the works of Sugathakumari we can see the variant phases of ecological thoughts. The exploitation of nature and the idea that nature shouldn't be the victim of the dominance of human beings are clearly represented. Through her sharp words she is triumphant in instilling the idea of Mother Earth and the need to conserve her. Poets and literary eminents like Sugathakumari through their contributions have created a great impact in the public sphere.

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