
**WILDERNESS AND SPIRITUALITY THROUGH NATURE,
CONTEXTUALIZING THE MOLDING OF THE WOMEN CHARACTERS**

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Abstract

*God writes the gospel not in the Bible alone, but on trees and flowers and clouds and stars.
Thrust Area: Eco Feminism & Eco Spirituality.*

Eco Feminism describes movements and philosophies that link feminism with ecology which tries to eradicate all forms of social injustice- injustice against women and the environment. It has particular and significant connections between Woman and Nature. **Eco Spirituality** connects the science of ecology with spirituality. It is a manifestation of the spiritual connection between human beings and the environment.

The Bible presents a galore of exemplary women who were virtuous and successful, vicious and unsuccessful. The paper proposes the connection between the wilderness and spirituality in women in the Bible.

- **Eve**, the progenitor of mankind in the Bible - the Birth and the Death in the forest.
- **Hagar** when sent out into the wilderness, the forest becomes a Savior and Protector
- **Miriam** is supported by the forest and Nature not only to rescue Moses but also to lead the women of Israel.
- **Zipporah** struggles with God in the wilderness and circumcises the foreskin of her son and saves her husband Moses.
- **Jezebel** takes revenge against the prophet Elijah in the forest.
- **Ruth and her mother-in-law Naomi** -a great relationship is kindled in the wilderness.
- **Deborah** becomes a great law-giver sitting under the Palm tree in the wilderness.
- **Namaan's wife and her servant girl** motivate and influence Namaan -The Nature is a great healer.

Every woman is carefully created and intricately designed by God to serve the Nature. Nature ever is a path maker to those who seek it and a destroyer who go against it. Hence there is a dire need to explore into the spiritual and environmental treasure available in the Nature. Nature being the greatest gift from God, it is essential that we not only care for it but protect and become a part in its proliferation.

Keywords: Eco Feminism, Eco Spirituality, Rescuer, Destroyer, Path maker, Treasure, Proliferation

Introduction

Eco Feminism describes movements and philosophies that link feminism with ecology which tries to eradicate all forms of social injustice- injustice against women and the environment. It has particular and significant connections between Woman and Nature. *Eco Spirituality* connects the science of ecology with spirituality. It is a manifestation of the spiritual connection between human beings and the environment.

Nature is the greatest gift given to the Mankind by God. He filled the Nature with beautiful trees, flowing waters, rich minerals and swarms of living creatures. They are for us not just to enjoy but with a purpose; to work it and keep it.

*And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the Garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.
(Genesis 2:15-17; KJV)*

The Bible presents a galore of exemplary women who were virtuous and successful, vicious and unsuccessful with forest as the background in molding of their characters. The paper proposes the connection between the wilderness and spirituality in women in the Bible.

Eve

Eve, the progenitor of the Mankind in the Bible, blessed as ‘The Mother of all living things’; went against the law (spirituality) due to her temptation, brought in guilt, shame, fear, enmity, unhappiness, slavery and finally death to the Mankind. She became the reason for laborious/painful child birth. In spite of all these, the Nature took her into its arms, clothed her, gave shelter and provided with food and hence became *the element of birth, protector and the provider*.

Hagar

Hagar means ‘one who flees’ or ‘one who seeks refuge’. Hagar was the servant to Abraham’s wife Sarai. Sarai treats the pregnant Hagar harshly, and in this instance she flees into the desert. She was hopeless and crying alone in the desert. When desert (angel) speaks to her; promising a blessing on her child, she finds solace and returns back to Abraham’s household. After fourteen years due to her vanity, she is driven out by her mistress Sarah. Hagar with her son Ishmael goes into the wilderness of Beersheba. When they run out of their water, unbearable

to see her son die of thirst, she leaves him under the bush and weeps. Then the Nature provides them a spring of water. They survive and later prosper in the desert of Paran. Through this character we know that *the Nature provides a refuge; gives a hope, protects and restores.*

Miriam

Miriam or Mary means ‘bitterness’, ‘rebellion’. Miriam was the eldest child of godly parents Amram and Jochebed and sister of Aaron and Moses; the two greatest leaders of Israel.

When the king of Egypt passed on a decree that every baby boy born in an Israelite family has to be killed; Miriam exhibited her wit in preserving Moses. The river Nile and the reeds that grew along the river were an aid that supported her baby brother from dying. After many decades when the Israelites were led out of Egypt by Moses, the God made way in the midst of the Red Sea. When the Red Sea parted and the Israelites walked through the dry ground, a dreary wilderness filled them. Miriam filled with God’s spirit and ecstasy led the joyous acclamations of the multitude as she knew that they would march better if they sang and danced.

The wilderness and her spirituality taught her to be jubilant so as to lead a great Nation under fear.

Though Miriam was a gifted poetess, prophetess and spiritual, in the later part of their journey her name was apropos for, because of her jealousy, Miriam’s fate was one of the bitterness. God condemned the proud and jealous prophetess Miriam for questioning and rejecting the leadership of her brother Moses. He smite her with leprosy, the most humiliating of diseases, through the divine cloud.

*“When the cloud removed from over the tent, behold, Miriam is leprous like snow.”
(Numbers 12:10)*

Here we see the *Nature as a Supporter, Rescuer, Redeemer when needed and a Chastiser when one becomes vicious.*

Zipporah

Zipporah means ‘a little bird’ or ‘a sparrow’ was the daughter of Jethro, a priest of Midian. She becomes wife to Moses when he flees from Egypt and comes to Midian. After many decades

God tells Moses to go back to Egypt to lead Israelites out of Egypt. So he takes his wife Zipporah and his two sons and starts his journey. On their way back to Egypt, God tries to kill Moses.

“The Lord met him and tried to kill him” (Exodus 4:24)

In the midst of the wilderness, Zipporah, though a foreigner, tussles with the God of Israel. Perceiving danger to her husband, circumcises the foreskin of her son with a flint and saves her husband Moses, thus fulfilling the Covenant of Circumcision, a blood ritual. (Gen 17:11). The tradition or bond of circumcision continues till date. ***Wilderness was a Harbinger and Savior where Zipporah sensed the miracle of life.***

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Ruth and her Mother-in-law Naomi

Naomi and Ruth grieved an awful misfortune in Moab when the men in their family died. Ruth a Moabite and a young widow followed her Hebrew Mother-in-law; Naomi, a poor widow; who decides to go back from Moab to her own country and people in Bethlehem. A great relationship was built up between them in the wilderness on their way back to Bethlehem. Ruth exhibits a great loyalty and friendship, as her name suggests, and both are bound together by the cords of love. When Ruth obeys Naomi and places herself as a humble gleaner, the fields feed them and this brings in prosperity. Later in her life, Ruth cherished to be a generational blessing where the savior came from her lineage.

The travel in the wilderness gave Ruth and Naomi a great hope that built up a relationship of loyalty, friendship, love, obedience and humility between them.

Deborah

Deborah is one of the most wonderful characters in the Bible. She is wife of Lapidoth and a prophetess (Judges 4 & 5). Deborah means ‘bee’. As the bee ranks the highest intelligence of all the animal kingdom, Deborah outstands as the wisest of all the women in the Old Testament. Like a bee she collects honey for her friends and has a fatal sting for her enemies.

Deborah rendered judgement sitting under the palm tree and flourished as a great law giver. Palm tree is unique by its qualities and symbolizes Victory, Peace, Fertility, Plentifulness and Life. We see the same elements of palm tree being imbibed and exhibited through practices of Deborah naturally making her a fearless patriot, great counsellor and a warrior, Prophetess of the God of Israel and the only female judge mentioned in the Bible; also known as Mother in Israel. Hence, *Deborah was figurative to the attributes of Nature.*

Jezebel

Jezebel means ‘chaste or free from carnal’, a paradoxical character to the proper noun. She was a Phoenician princess who got married to Ahab, the prince of Israel. She was a licentious women. Her immoralities and superstitions that flooded the nation resulted in a great catastrophic drought for three years as warned by the boldest prophet and miracle worker of the God of Israel, Elijah. Jezebel challenges the power of God to that of Baal, her favorite deity. When Elijah called on the Lord, fire fell from heaven consuming the offering- the wood, water and everything around it. As she gets defeated Elijah orders 850 false Prophets to be slain.

Here we see *the drought and the great fire in Nature as a destructor* of evil doers and practices of the hypocrites.

Namaan’s wife and her servant girl

Namaan was an Aramean, a valiant commander of the Army of Syria but was a leper. A captive young girl from Israel who served Namaan’s wife influences Namaan to go to the prophet Elisha in Israel who could heal him. Though Namaan gets angry in the beginning, convinced by **his wife and the servant girl** dips himself seven times in the muddy water of Jordan and gets healed. *Here we see the Nature as a great healer.* The Bible also shows that most of the prophets prophesized living in the wilderness.

To sum up; Nature does not just give us its enriched physical resources but guards, enchants and enhances us in exhibiting our values. *Nature is portrayed as an element of Birth, Love, Hope, Protector, Supporter, Redeemer, Healer, Chastiser and a Destructor* through the various feminine characters and the qualities displayed through their life.

Conclusion

Every woman is carefully created and intricately designed by God to serve the Nature. Nature ever is a path maker to those who seek it and a destroyer who go against it forever .Hence, there is a need to explore into the spiritual and environmental treasure available in Nature. *Nature being the greatest gift from God and is totally in tune with God's commandments, it is essential that we not only care for it but also protect and become a part in its proliferation that would devise a strong transcendent imminent offspring.*

“I love to think of nature as an unlimited broadcasting station, through which God speaks to us every hour, if we will only tune in.”- George Washington Carver

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