

# GENDER AND CONFLICT: AN ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK FOR UNDERSTANDING CONFLICT THROUGH GENDER PERSPECTIVE

<sup>1\*</sup> Amit kumar jha, <sup>2#</sup>Dr. Awadhesh kumar

<sup>1\*</sup>UGC-Net Sociology, Banaras Hindu University

<sup>2#</sup>Post Doctoral Fellow (U.G.C), Department of Sociology, Banaras Hindu University

**ABSTRACT:** Conflicts are divided into international and national conflict. In International wars, gender relations are affected often by polarization of masculine and feminine identities. Intra-state wars includes civil wars where marginalized groups are seeking autonomy or transformation of state. Gender- relations are affected by the increasing physical, economic and emotional insecurity. Men who go in war are particularly at risk of being killed and in the absence of them women have to bear the major burden for the maintenance of their families. This leads to majority of women refugees. This article includes the gender analysis of conflictive Feminist-pacifist, ecofeminist writings and Feminist analysis of militarization

**Key words-** Conflict, Eco-feminist, Gender, Militarization, Intra-state wars.

**INTRODUCTION:** Number of factors, including ethnicity, age and occupational group may affect how people experience conflict, however, there is consistent evidence that women experience conflict differently than men. Conflict has differential impacts on men and women. There are few attempts to examine conflict from gender and development perspective. There are other areas of analysis which can be drawn on as step towards constructing an analysis of conflict from gender perspective. These are:

1. Feminist-Pacifist.
2. Ecofeminist.
3. Feminist analysis of militarisation.

These are based on different conflicting, conceptualization of men and women and their relationship to conflict.

**GENDER BASED VIOLENCE (GBV)-** Gender-based violence is a phenomenon deeply rooted in gender inequality, and continues to be one of the most notable human rights violations within all societies. GBV is violence targeted at individual or group on the basis of their gender. Both women and men experience gender-based violence but the majority of victims are women and girls.

Evidence suggests that while women and girls are more likely to be victims of sexual and gender based violence. Sexual and Gender minorities i.e., Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex person (LGBT) are also targeted, yet this has received minimal attention. Using the 'gender-based' aspect is important as it highlights the fact that many forms of violence against women are rooted in power inequalities between women and men. The Istanbul Convention (convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence), is the benchmark for international legislation on tackling gender-based violence.

Under the Istanbul Convention acts of gender-based violence are emphasised as resulting in 'physical, sexual, psychological or economic harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life. The Convention also contains a definition of gender: for the purpose of the Convention gender is defined in Article 3(c) as "the socially constructed roles, behavior, activities and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for women and men". Moreover, the treaty establishes a series of offences characterized as violence against women. States which ratify the Convention must criminalize several offences, including: psychological violence; stalking ; physical violence; sexual violence, including rape, forced marriage ; female genital mutilation , forced abortion and forced sterilization . The Convention also includes an article targeting crimes committed in the name of so-called "honour".

**WOMEN, PACIFISM AND FEMINIST MOVEMENT FOR PEACE:** Men are largely responsible for initiating wars and for fighting them. Much of the rhetoric of war and combat is embedded with particular views of masculinity. In this view women are often seen as merely the passive victims of war and conflict. Historical examples are evident of women's attempts to achieve peace through mediation , this shows women's greater preference for peace. There has always been a link between the women's movement, feminism and pacifism, for e.g. Sex strikes declared by the women of ancient Greece in **Lysistrata** in order to convince their husbands to stop war.

The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom is active currently in attempting to bring an end to conflicts and in campaigning for peace. WILPF developed out of the International Women's Congress against World War I that took place in The Hague, Netherlands, in 1915. This organization is to bring together women of different political views to study and make known the causes of war and work for a permanent peace and to unite women worldwide who oppose oppression and exploitation. Women have actively participated in organising movement against nuclear weapons and nuclear testing and establishing women-only communities such as in Greenham Common in UK. In Japan peace camp was built by the women at the base of Mount Fuji to protest against the loss of their Shibokusa. The Women in Black Movement was begun by Israeli women in Jerusalem in 1988 as a protest against the occupation of Palestine. Responding to serious violations of human rights by Israeli soldiers in the, the women held a vigil every Friday in central Jerusalem, wearing black clothing in mourning for all victims of the conflict. This movement has inspired a world-wide women in Black movement protesting against violence and conflict.

The dominance of men on conflict and the active role of women in seeking peace views 'aggressiveness' as inherently male in contrast to women's 'nurturing' nature. For some, male biology is seen as violent and female as

the essence of life-giving , nurturing and empathy as symbolized by their mothering roles. In the words of Longwe, “War is a foolish game, invented by men and played by men. It should be stopped by women. War is a game which men enjoy more aggressive, more uncompromising and more destructive than football. They like the uniforms, they like to the marching up and down, and waving flags. They like saluting each other. Most of them like killing.”

**ECOFEMINIST APPROACHES** – “Is female to Male as Nature is to Culture”.The word Ecofeminism is coined by French feminist Françoise d’Eaubonne in 1974. It is a branch of feminism that examines the connections between women and nature. Ecofeminism adds both a commitment to the environment and an awareness of the associations made between women and nature. Specifically, this philosophy emphasizes the ways both nature and women are treated by patriarchal (or male-centred) society. The analysis depends upon the ‘culture’ taken generically as a special sort of process in the world. Each culture, in its own way and in its own terms constitute evidence that particular culture considers women inferior. These evidences are constituted as:

1. Elements of cultural ideology that explicitly devalue women as per their roles and tasks.
2. Symbolic devices (implicitly making a statement of inferior valuation).
3. Social-structural arrangements that exclude women from participation.

If we try to explain the universal devaluation of women, we can say that women is being identified with or seems to be a symbol of something that every culture devalues. Every culture is engaged in the process of generating a system of meaningful forms (symbols) by means of which humanity attempts to assert control over nature. There is something genetically inherent in the male that makes them naturally dominant sex; that something is lacking in females, and as a result women are not only naturally subordinate but in general quite satisfied with their position. Woman’s body and its functions seem to place her closer to nature. Gender and diversity are interlinked in many ways. The construction of woman as the “second sex” is linked to the same inability to cope with difference as is the development paradigm that leads to the displacement and extinction of diversity in the biological world.

Gender and Diversity are interlinked in many ways. The construction of women as the “second-sex” is limited to the same inability to cope with difference as is the development paradigm that leads to the displacement and extinction of diversity in the biological world. The Patriarchy world view men as the ‘measure of value’ with space only for hierarchy. Women are treated as unequal and inferior as in the case of nature’s diversity, which is seen as not intrinsically valuable; however its value is conferred only through economic exploitation for commercial gain. Women, as farmers, have remained invisible despite their contribution. Economists tend to discount women’s work, because it falls outside the so-called ‘production boundary’. These omissions arise not because few women work, but women undertake diverse responsibility at a time.

Ecofeminism collected and reshaped certain ecological struggles in its quest to move feminism beyond a biological determinist impasse. Women are fostered in a unique understanding of nature and natural cycles. This understanding needs to be preserved because it is the basis of women’s present participation in ecological struggles and a template for future, harmonious, ecological society. Ecofeminism has sought to explain the relations producing a situation in which women are positioned as closer to nature than men.

Rachel Carson made the question of life on earth a public issue. Her *Silent Spring* (1962) focused attention on the death-producing effects of chemical insecticides accumulating in the soil and tissues of living organisms. For liberal ecofeminism, environmental problems result from the overly rapid development of natural resources. As producers and reproducers of life, women in tribal and traditional cultures over the centuries have had highly significant interactions with the environment. As gatherers of food, fuel and medicinal herbs; and bearers and caretakers of young children, women's knowledge of nature has helped to sustain life in every global human habitat. In colonial and capitalist societies, women's direct interactions with nature have been circumscribed, and their traditional roles as producers of food and clothing, as gardeners and poultry tenders were largely appropriated by men. Women's roles were shifted from production to the reproduction, with increased domesticity and the bearing and the socialization of young children. Abby Peterson points out, "Men bear the responsibility for and dominate the production of exchange commodities, while women bear a responsibility for reproducing the work-force and social relations. Under industrial capitalism, reproduction is subordinate to production."

#### **WOMEN-LED ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVISM AND WOMEN WRITINGS IN INDIA-**

Ecofeminism connects the exploitation and domination of women to the environment, and argues that there is a connection between women and nature. They believe that this connection is explained through the traditional 'female' values of nurturing and cooperation, which are present among both women and nature. This theory questions previously held patriarchal paradigm and holds that the domination of women by men is intimately linked to the destruction of the environment.

If women-led environmental activism and writing in India is concerned the Chipko Movement has gained iconic status and is the highly successful example of grassroots environmentalism in India. The movement originated in the Garhwal region of Uttarakhand, local women were affected by the state-level decision of granting private contractors harvest rights for the trees to manufacture cricket bats. Due to excessive deforestation the year 1970 saw its most devastating flood and equally destructive landslides. This movement mobilised women and brought about the concept of tree-hugging to stop activities such as deforestation.

In recent times, Medha Patkar, Arundhati Roy, Vandana Shiva, Kamala Markandaya, heads the Narmada Bachao Andolan, a social movement consisting of tribal people (Adivasis), farmers, environmentalists and human rights activists. This movement was against the Sardar Sarovar Dam being built across the Narmada River in Gujarat in India.

When coming up to women writing in India, like its male stream has been subjected to all kinds of influences, both cultural and social, native and foreign, facilitated by an unprecedented exposure in all the fields related to women's enterprises from the domestic sphere to the social tier. We have a substantial body of women's literature, the roots of which go well into the past, from the nineteenth century and early twentieth century writers like Swarna Kumari Devi and Ras Sundari Devi of Bengal, Ramabai Ranade and Lakshmi Bai Tilak of Marathi, to the seventeenth and eighteenth century writers like the long-suppressed Muddupalanai of Telugu. Women's relationship to the environment is ambivalent, thus, disputing the dualism of nature or culture and yet straddling the grey area

between these two binaries. This is what highlighted by women writing Indian fiction in English. Mahashweta Devi has dedicated much of her activism and writings to the cause of betterment of tribal people and their environment in India. Arundhati Roy, best known as the Booker Prize winner of *God of Small things*, used her passionate pen as weapon for causes ranging from Narmada Bachaon Andolan, to nuclear testing in India. Vandana Shiva, a prominent Indian eco-feminist thinker and activist, has made major contributions to the field through her works such as *Eco-feminism* (Mies and Shiva,1993), *The Violence of Green Revolution*(1993), *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Survival in India*(2010) , and *Biopiracy* (2012). According to Shiva, “Women and nature have an intricate and intimate relationship, as well as a shared history on the grounds of a common experience of exploitation, degradation and domination by an androcentric attitude.” She has also argued that degradation of women and nature is due to the emergence of development, modernization, advancements in science and technology and new reproduction technologies. Beena Agarwal in her book “*The Gender and Environment debate: lessons from India* claimed her perspective, that women cannot be considered a homogeneous group, differing on the basis of class, race, culture and caste. She is in view that ecofeminism is inadequate because it ideologically constructs relationship between gender and nature this limitation made Beena Agarwal to come up with an alternative theoretical formulation to eco-feminism, which she termed as Feminist Environmentalism. In this perspective, a male and female relationship with nature is rooted in material reality. She highlighted the division of labor, property and power to shape the experience of the people.

Feminist environmentalism has defended a democratic alternative approach, which focuses on transformation. It emphasizes the need for shifts in the composition of forces of production, alternative technology usage for production and class and gender redistribution on the basis of decentralized planning and production. Beena Agarwal encouraged a need to involve localized communities and rural people (especially women) in interaction with trained scientists. Chayya Dattar, a founding member of “Forum against rape” and “Stree Mukti Sanghtan” (Women’s liberation Organisation) develop an alternative development model in her work titled *Ecofeminism Revisited* (2011), which was opposed to market-oriented capitalism. Further, she aims to create awareness for environmental destruction by introducing a substantially alternative development agenda.

Many Indian women novelists not only explore female subjectivity in order to establish an identity but also retained social values. Indian women authors in English such as KamlaMarkandaya(*Nectar in a Sieve*), Kiran Desai (*Fire on the Mountain*), Arundati Roy(*A God of Small things*), GeetaMehta (*A River Sutra*) it becomes clear that they seem to deal with the issues like the position of women, the relationship of men and women among themselves and with nature.

**GENDERED IMPACT OF MILITARISATION:** The understanding of gender ideologies and the ways in which both masculinity and femininity are constructed in the process of militarization. In militarization process traditional ideals are stressed. Men’s masculinity is called on to encourage them to take up arms in defence of their country, ethnic group or political cause-and in defence of ‘their’ women. Women are the bearers of the culture. For example in former Yugoslavia, women are assigned the mythical roles of ‘Mother Juvoica’ (The mother who sacrificed nine sons and her husband to the homeland, without tears) and ‘Daughter of Kosovo. Actually many

warfare situations is a reassertion of patriarchy. Notions of masculinity are bound up in the military which is almost always defined by male, symbolised by images such as Rambo, who is widely recognized across the world. Generally women are employed directly by the military undertake 'feminine' roles of nursing and clerical work. In the words of Segal(1978), "War do not occur because men are eager to fight, on the contrary, military aggression always requires carefully controlled and systematic action at the state level, which plays upon public fears, vulnerabilities, prides and prejudices'. The training of men in armies often involves the notion of aggressive masculinity which is intimately related to misogyny. The misogyny of armies is intertwined with both homophobia and racism, women and members of ethnic minorities who enter the military are frequently subjected to sexual and racial harassment. Women have been excluded from decision making surrounding the war and peace and from positions of influence within armies. There is a debate over the effect on military ideology of the inclusion of more women in the armed forces and over whether women would be able to make armies less sexist and abusive of human rights.

Due to under-representation of women in national and local structures of power and decision-making, international negotiations , whether trade agreements, diplomacy or war are carried out by men who are, with few exceptions, the governmental leaders, diplomats and high-ranking international civil servants. The relationship between militarization and the oppression of women should not be confused with the idea that all men will necessarily benefit from the making of war, men are primarily losers in war-i.e. they make up majority of casualties in situation of conflict. Women become the bearers of cultural heritage of a nation or community and the modes of behavior acceptable for them may decrease. For example in Afghan camps in Pakistan, the influence of the religious leaders was increased, obliging all women- including urban women who had formerly been accustomed to relative freedom of movement-to go in Purdah. The erosion of women's human rights can be seen in the introduction of law legitimizing the murder of women suspected of offending family honour.

**Conclusion-** The holding up of women as symbolic bearers of caste, ethnic or national identity can expose them to the risk of attack. The widespread occurrence of rape in times of conflict has attracted particular attention and has been seen as directly related to the position of women in communities as bearers of cultural identity. The rape of women in conflict situations is intended not only as violence against women, but as an act of aggression against a nation or community. The use of weapons and participation in armed forces are all power-enhancing activities which, with some exceptions, are considered 'masculine' and thus reserved for men. However, there are growing numbers of women serving in armies across the world. There may be high costs to transgressing the culturally imposed boundaries between masculine and feminine behavior. As we can observe that men who refuse to fight risk being ridiculed, imprisoned or even killed for their lack of courage. Equally women who contradict female stereotypes by killing are often regarded as much more unnatural.

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