



Representation of Indigenous Women and Environment Sustainability in Selected Works of Mahasweta Devi

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Abstract

Indigenous women's position in the development and conservation of biodiversity has been theoretically non-existent. The existing world view never judges their practices of biodiversity as scientific. But the indigenous ways are very much in harmony with the basic world-view. Indigenous women characters, found in Devi's selected works such as *The Book of the Hunter*, *The Witch* and *The Hunt* belonging to *Shabar*, *Santal*, *Oraon*, *Munda* etc., the tribal communities, live in tune with ethnocentric ecological order. Indigenous setting, sacred beliefs and practices, devoid of exploitative patriarchal practice, as the core of the ecological cycles responsible for sustainable production. Their labour and expertise have been defined into nature and being embedded ecologically and culturally in rituals and festivals celebrating the renewal of life. Women preserving seeds means conserving diversity and harmonious balance based on their knowledge and skills as indigenous crop-improvement strategies. Gender studies enhance the scope of such understanding that women in India are major producers of food in the context of value, volume and hours worked as authenticated by Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva in their seminal work *Ecofeminism*. Continuous marginalization of both women and nature in the androcentric model of development urges women to conserve nature. It is, thus, a rich eco-literal biodiversity being served through their gradual progression of biodiversity. Through the interpretation of selected texts, the article aims to bring the discussion of innate relation between Environmental Sustainability and Indigenous Women to the fore, and represent them as the primary conserver of maintaining rich eco-literal biodiversity.

Keywords: Indigenous Women, Environment, Sustainability, Eco-literal