



# International Journal of Innovative Research in Science Engineering and Technology (IJIRSET)

*(A Monthly, Peer Reviewed, Refereed, Scholarly Indexed, Open Access Journal)*



**Impact Factor: 8.699**

**Volume 14, Issue 5, May 2025**

# **Eco Feminism in the Selected Novel “The Bean Trees” by Barbara Kingsolver**

**Kavitha. K**

PhD Scholar, Department of English Literature, Providence College for Women (Autonomous), Coonoor, India

**ABSTRACT:** The novel *The Bean Trees* by Barbara Kingsolver is an American novelist, essayist and poet. She was brought up in the rural Kentucky. She worked as a freelance writer. She has received awards which includes orange prize for fiction. The novel ‘*The Bean Tree*’ brings out the importance of the inter connection between societies. It also symbolizes the central thematic idea Motherhood.

The present paper deals with the study of Barbara Kingsolver’s “*The Bean Trees*” as a Eco-feminist novel. It is a speculative novel, which examines the issue of Eco-feminity. It mainly focuses on the nature connection between women and nature as exclusive and unique and supports the thematic concept “Mother Earth”.

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

Feminism is concerned with the constructs of intersectionality, dimensions of social life, social inequality, and social transformation. Feminist theory works to support change and understanding through acknowledging and disrupting power and oppression. Theory aims to understand the nature of gender inequality and focuses on gender politics, power relations and sexuality. Feminism is also based on experiences of gender roles and relations. The major feminist theories are **Liberal Feminism, Radical Feminism, Marxist and Socialist Feminism, Cultural Feminism, Eco-Feminism. Theoretical Background.**

The theoretical background of the novel is Eco feminism. The term ecofeminism was coined by the famous French feminist Francoise d’Eaubonne in 1974. She used it “to call upon women to lead an ecological revolution to save the planet”. The insight of linking women with nature contains to the times of archaic classical mythology. Nature is portrayed as a woman as its fundamental functions includes reproduction and nurture. Similarly women’s duties are planned as natural to her. Thus, the connection of nature and women is best described by the phrase. “Nature naturalizes women and women feminize nature”. The study is to know the relation between women and nature and to understand the parallel behavior they have been exercised into in patriarchal society.

Barbara Kingsolver was born in 1955, and grew up in rural Kentucky. She earned degrees in biology from DePauw University and the University of Arizona, and has worked as a freelance writer and author since 1985. She has written various literary works; *The Bean Trees*, *Homeland*, *Animal Dreams*, *Another America*, *Pigs in Heaven*, *High Tide in Tucson*, *Prodigal Summer*, *Small Wonder*, *Last Stand: America’s Virgin Lands*, with photographer Annie Griffiths Belt, *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle: A Year of Food Life* and *The Lacuna*. Kingsolver’s first novel, *The Bean Trees*, was published in 1988, and told the story of a young woman who leaves Kentucky for Arizona, adopting an abandoned child along the way; she wrote it at night while pregnant with her first child and struggling with insomnia.

*The Bean Trees* begins when Taylor decides that it’s time to leave Pittman, Kentucky, where she lives with her mother, and make something of herself. She starts her personal journey of self-discovery, leaving everything behind, including her name. In the middle of Oklahoma, on land owned by the Cherokee Nation, Taylor’s car breaks down. Taylor stops to have it repaired and to get something to eat at a restaurant. Her life changes dramatically when, sitting in her car and ready to leave the restaurant and continue driving, a Cherokee woman puts a child wrapped in a blanket on the front seat of Taylor’s car. Suddenly, a strange woman comes and asks Taylor to take the baby. Taylor gets confused and the baby speaks nothing. Later on, Taylor names the baby Turtle.

‘ Taylor and Turtle travel to Tucson, Arizona. During the journey, their car stops because of engine problem car problems, they reach to a business store named Jesus Is Lord Used Tires. The owner of the business, Mattie, a courageous and lovely person, finally hires Taylor. Taylor soon discovers that Mattie’s shop is also a house for political



refugees from Guatemala. Then she knows two refugees Estevan and Esperanza, Taylor becomes more aware of discrimination and social injustice. Looking for a place to live, Taylor responds to an advertisement in a newspaper and rents a room from Lou Ann Ruiz. Vol. 15. No. 61. 14th Year. December 2019 778 Taylor, Lou Ann and her young son make a sense of family. Gradually, the safe environment and the feelings that Taylor gives to Turtle pay off and Turtle starts to speak. She starts with the word bean then the name of vegetables. Someday, when Turtle is in the park with Lou, someone takes Turtle. Fortunately, Edna has a stick and uses it to hit the committer, setting Turtle free. After the attack, Turtle takes away and stops speaking. Because a social worker becomes involved in the case, it is exposed that Taylor has no legal right to keep Turtle and could lose her to the state if relatives are not found. Taylor with Turtle agrees to take Estevan and Esperanza to a safe house in Oklahoma. Taylor tries to find Turtle's relatives so that they can legally sign Turtle over to Taylor's care. Unfortunately, Turtle's relatives cannot be found. Taylor asks Estevan and Esperanza for help. They pose as Turtle's family and express their wish to relinquish custody of their daughter to their friend, Taylor. Taylor adopts Turtle and then takes Estevan and Esperanza to the safe house. In the car on the way home to Tucson, Turtle names vegetables, this time including the names of the people in her family.

## **II. ECOFEMINIST ANALYSIS**

Kingsolver's education as a biologist and her strong love for nature are prominent throughout the novel. Apart from the many beautiful images of the landscapes around the characters themselves also love the natural world and find peace when they are in natural environments. In the novel the Protagonist Taylor engage herself into the environment when she moves to Arizona. Though the plants and wildlife in the desert are the polar opposite of the natural world in Taylor's original Kentucky home, Taylor is charmed with the plain beauty of this new landscape. Natural imagery in Barbara Kingsolver the *Bean Trees* compares women destiny with nature and giving oppression to women and nature.

"We crossed to Arizona state line at sunup. The clouds were pink and fat and hilarious-looking, like the hippo ballerinas in a Disney movie. The road took us through a place called Texas Canyon that looked nothing like Texas, heaven be praised for that, but looked like nothing else I had ever seen either. It was a kind of forest, except that in place of trees there were all these puffy looking rocks shaped like roundish animals and roundish people"

The Novel points out the idea that miracle happen in modest places. Appropriately, it is Turtle who makes the discovery that gives the novel its title. Turtle is herself a miracle in an unlikely place. Like the bean trees discovered in the ugly park. Turtle is discovered in a barren parking lot. And like the dirty, barren park, which later seems magical. Turtle at first strikes Taylor as an unwanted burden, but gradually becomes more and more important to Taylor, until the possibility of losing Turtle becomes the main conflict in the novel.

"As I planted the beans, Turtle followed me down the row digging each one up after I planted it and putting it back in the jar. Good girl, I said. I could see a whole new era arriving in Turtle's and my life."

Wisteria vines play a special symbolic role in their relation to Turtle's character development. Wisteria vines (or "bean trees," as Turtle calls them) are ugly looking plants at first, just as Turtle started the novel in a comatose, abused state. Yet the wisteria vines are also able to grow in poor soil where no other plants thrive. Turtle too comes back from her unfortunate infancy to become a vibrant little girl. At the end of the novel, Taylor learns that wisteria vines grow thanks to insects called rhizobia that create fertilizer for the plant.

"But this is the most interesting part, wisteria vines, like other legumes, often thrive in poor soil, the book said. Their secret is something called rhizobia. These are microscopic bugs that live underground in little knots on the roots. They stuck nitrogen gas right out of the soil and turn it into fertilizer for the plant."

"Outside of town we passed a run-over blackbird in the road, flattened on the center line. As the cars and trucks rolled by, the gusts of wind caused one stiff wing to flap up and down in a pitiful little flagging-down gesture. My instinct was to step on the brakes, but of course there no earthly reason to stop for a dead bird."

Eco-feminism asserts that women are described in various terms that are close to nature and animals, for examples; rose, tree, cat and bird, by using such terms, it has become clear that woman treated as nature and oppressed by male domination.

### **III. CONCLUSION**

Kingsolver The Bean tree gives the clear picture that the novel is Eco-feminist novel. Being Eco feminist write Kingsolver emphases on the connection between women and nature by male dominated society. And also it helps us to known that woman and nature must be treated carefully and make power must be retreated against women and nature. She also suggests that the mutual relationship between native people and the young generation should be considered. As well as, woman and nature should be protected from the challenges of male and industrial revolution, and men have to recognize the importance of women and nature.

“The Been Trees” shows the relationship between female and nature from the peculiar angle of a woman writer. She also shows the victimized status of both women and nature.



INTERNATIONAL  
STANDARD  
SERIAL  
NUMBER  
INDIA



# INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF INNOVATIVE RESEARCH

IN SCIENCE | ENGINEERING | TECHNOLOGY

 9940 572 462  6381 907 438  [ijirset@gmail.com](mailto:ijirset@gmail.com)



[www.ijirset.com](http://www.ijirset.com)

Scan to save the contact details