



# Ecological Feminism



Presented by  
Morial Shah

Terms and  
Definitions

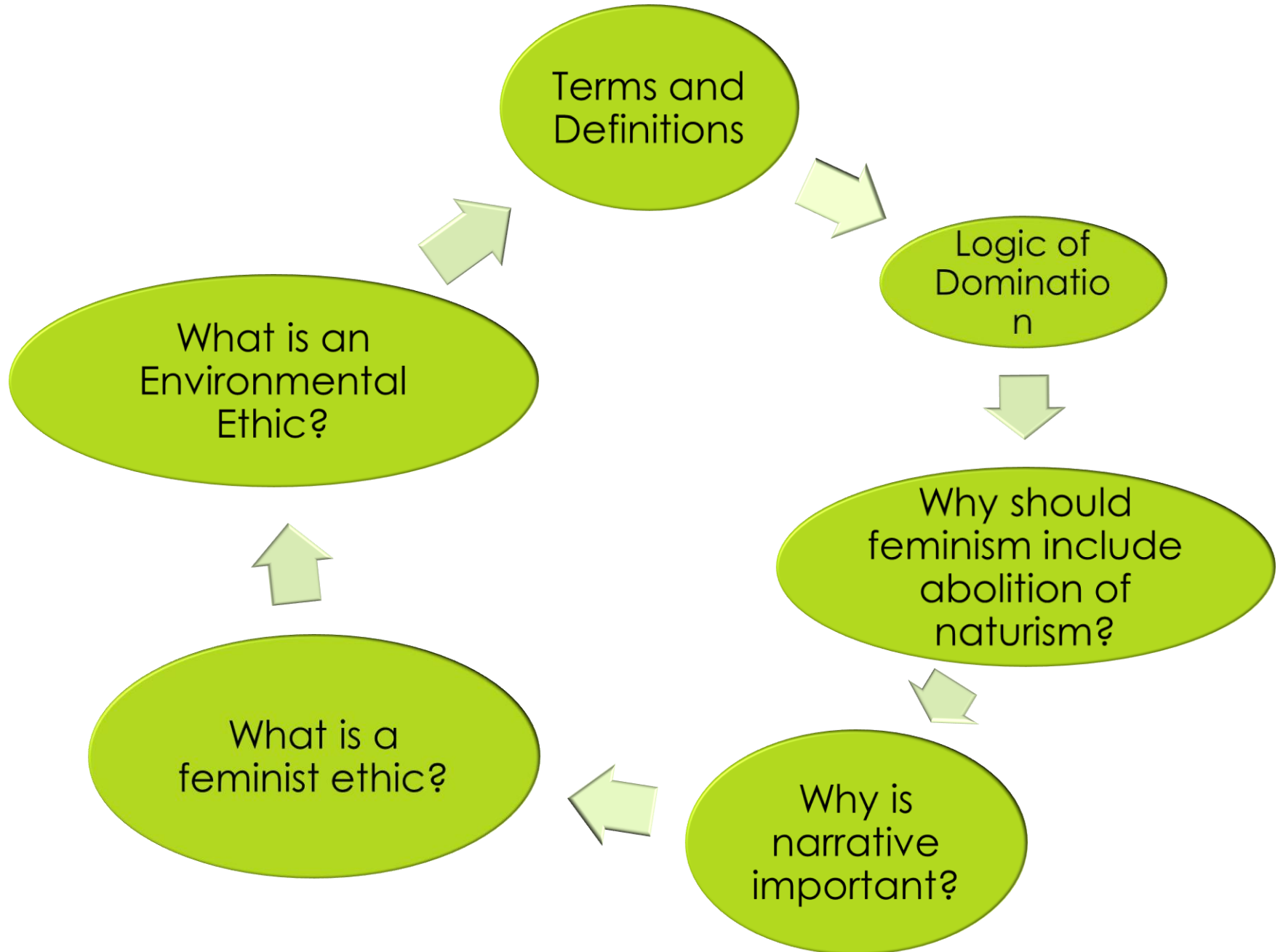
Logic of  
Domination

Why should  
feminism include  
abolition of  
naturism?

Why is  
narrative  
important?

What is a  
feminist ethic?

What is an  
Environmental  
Ethic?



**ECOLOGICAL FEMINISM** : There are historical, symbolic, theoretical connections between the domination of women and the domination of nonhuman nature.

**FEMINISM**: Movement to end sexist oppression. Involves elimination of all factors contributing to women's domination or subordination

**FEMINIST ISSUE**: Contributes in some way to understanding the oppression of women. E.g. deforestation and reforestation in India

**CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**: Socially constructed basic beliefs, values, attitudes, & assumptions which shape views of oneself and one's world (affected by race, religion etc)

**OPPRESSIVE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**: explains & justifies relationships of domination & subordination. It includes:

- ▣ VALUE-HIERARCHICAL THINKING: “updown” thinking
- ▣ VALUE DUALISMS: Value based on oppositional disjunctive pairs e.g. (higher status to mind, male & reason than to female, nature and emotion)
- ▣ LOGIC OF DOMINATION: Justifies subordination

# Logic of Domination

- Logic of domination, coupled with value-hierarchical thinking & value dualisms, is used to justify domination, for example:
  - (B1) Women are identified with nature and the realm of the physical; men are identified with the “human” and the realm of the mental.
  - (B2) Whatever is identified with nature and the realm of the physical is inferior to (“below”) whatever is identified with the “human” and the realm of the mental; or, conversely, the latter is superior to (“above”) the former.
  - (B3) Thus, women are inferior to (“below”) men; or, conversely, men are superior to (“above”) women.
  - (B4) For any X and Y, if X is superior to Y, then X is justified in subordinating Y.
  - (B5) Thus, men are justified in subordinating women
- If sound, B establishes patriarchy.
- Since all feminists oppose patriarchy (B5), they must oppose the logic of domination (B4) (some ecofeminists dispute truth-value of B1 and B2 in contexts not purely historical)

# Why should the logic of feminism include abolition of naturism?

## ■ *Logic of Domination argument:*

(C1) Feminism is a movement to end sexism.

(C2) But sexism is conceptually linked with naturism (through an oppressive conceptual framework characterized by a logic of domination).

(C3) Thus, feminism is (also) a movement to end naturism.

## ■ *Social construct argument:* Women were socially dominated in historically specific ways by men; nonhuman nature was socially dominated in historically specific ways by humans.

# Why narrative?

From the rock climbing, narrative is important because:

- Considers relationships seriously, contrasts with reductionist modality
- Highlights attitudes usually ignored in the West, e.g. conquering vs. caring relationship
- Emergent from particular situation of moral agent rather than imposed (from a predetermined principle /rule) → emergent narrative stresses voice → incorporates multiplicity of cross cultural voices

Loving eye vs. Arrogant eye perceptions explain care vs. conquest relations:

- Loving eye: respects two different entities in a relationship.
- Arrogant eye: builds a moral hierarchy of sameness. Like beings deserve better behavior than unlike ones → "Unity in Sameness"

# What is a Feminist Ethic?

- Critiques male bias in ethics whenever it occurs and develops ethics that are not male biased. This involves:
  - Articulating values that are underplayed in mainstream ethics
  - Engaging in building new theories and revamping old ones in gender sensitive ways
- It has certain boundary conditions i.e. conditions that delimit territory without dictating patterns or content

# Ecofeminist ethic?

Ecofeminism critiques male bias and provides a non-male biased ethic. It satisfies boundary conditions of a feminist ethic. Features include:

1. Anti-naturalism: Rejects thinking about or acting towards nonhuman nature using a logic of domination
2. Contextualist ethic: Instead of giving significance to nonhumans exclusively on the basis of some similarity with humans or ideas about preconceived rights, it considers how a moral agent relates to others
3. Structurally pluralistic: Recognizes diversity among humans and between humans & nonhuman nature.
4. Theory in process: Focuses on emerging patterns of meaning that may change over time.
5. Inclusivist: Emerges from diverse voices of women who suffer domination and domination of nature
6. Not objective: Presents the 'better bias of the oppressed.'
7. Relationship Value: Reserves a central place for values (care, love, friendship and trust etc) that suggest our relationships to others are central to our understanding of who we are.
8. Rethinks what is to be human and how humans should engage in ethical decision-making. Rejects 'abstract individualism' – the position that human essence or nature is independent of historical context.



**Conclusion: Any feminist theory and any environmental ethic which fails to take seriously the interconnected domination of women and nature is simply inadequate**

- In the narrative about the boy whose grandparents asked him to hunt mercifully, Warren is struck by the “power of the environmental ethic that grows out of narrative... and doing what is appropriate in a given situation.” Assuming that you can eat plants in the boy’s reservation, do you think it is ethical for people to hunt, kill and eat animals?
- Why would a justice-based ethic be inadequate for addressing Warren’s concerns?
- Do you think we need a ‘feminist’ environmental ethic?
- Warren’s ecofeminist ethic is fluid, contextual, plural and process based. Do you think such fluid ethics are useful?
- Is an environmental ethic “inadequate” (as Warren calls it) when it fails to take into account the relation between the domination of women and the domination of nature?
- Do you think gender is important when considering the current domination of nonhuman nature?
- Warren’s ecofeminist ethic is not objective. Do you think the bias of the oppressed is a better bias?
- Do you think analyzing narratives or studying relationships between entities is useful for ethics?
- If a woman lovingly fells a tree because felling the tree makes her happy, would an ecofeminist consider her act moral?

## Critique

- Does not address the issue of women dominating nature. Assume that women's subjugation and nature's subjugation are related occurrences. In contemporary times, they may not necessarily be related.
- Her ecofeminist ethic is contextual, plural and process based. The fluid ecofeminist ethic has limited practical utility for determining absolutes of moral behaviour.
- She emphasizes that women and nature have been historically dominated, and assumes without explicitly stating that such domination necessarily continues today.
- Under feminism that emerged from the enlightenment framework, Warren's claim that domination of nature is wrong in the same way that domination of women is wrong makes little sense, since (according to the framework) domination can only be considered to be unjust when the object dominated has a will.
- The women-nature domination link may not apply cross-culturally e.g. South Asia
- Sexism's conceptual link to naturism does not necessarily mean feminism (movement to fight sexism) must become a movement to end naturism. Feminism is not necessarily a justice movement that must remove all forms of oppression resulting from the logic of domination.
- Warren's ecofeminist ethic, by admission, is not objective. She does not adequately qualify why the views of the oppressed are a better bias.