Ecological feminism: There are historical, symbolic and 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 and assumptions which shape views of oneself and one’s world (affected by race, religion etc)

Oppressive Conceptual Framework: Explains and justifies relationships of domination and subordination. It includes:

1. Value-hierarchical thinking: “updown” thinking
2. Value Dualisms: Value based on oppositional disjunctive pairs e.g. female=emotion
3. Logic of domination: Justifies subordination

Problems with the Logic of Domination
The logic of domination, coupled with value-hierarchical thinking and value dualisms, is used to justify patriarchy. Example:

**(**B I) 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.

Why should the logic of feminism include abolition of naturism (oppression of non human nature)?

*Logic of Domination argument:*

**(**Cl) 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*: Men socially dominated women in historically specific ways by men; humans socially dominated nonhuman nature in historically specific ways

What is a Feminist Ethic?

Critiques male bias in ethics whenever it occurs and develops ethics that are not male biased. Involves:

1. Articulating values that are underplayed in mainstream ethics
2. Engaging in theory building and revamping old ones in gender sensitive ways

What is an Ecofeminist ethic?

Critiques male bias wherever it occurs and provides an ethic that is not male biased. 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 ethics: Shifts from giving significance to nonhumans exclusively on the basis of some similarity with humans or ideas about preconceived rights. For ecofeminists, how a moral agent relates to others is significant.
3. Structurally pluralistic: Recognizes diversity among humans and between humans and nonhuman nature.
4. Theory as a Proces: Focuses on emerging patterns of meaning
5. Inclusivist: Emerges from diverse voices of women who suffer domination
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/nature is independent of historical context)

Conclusion: Any feminist theory and any environmental ethic that fails to consider the interconnected domination of women and nature is inadequate

Discussion Questions:

1. 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?
2. Why would a justice-based ethic be inadequate for addressing Warren’s concerns?
3. Do you think we need a ‘feminist’ environmental ethic?
4. Warren’s ecofeminist ethic is fluid, contextual, plural and process based. Do you think such fluid ethics are useful?
5. 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?
6. Do you think gender is important when considering the current domination of nonhuman nature?
7. Warren’s ecofeminist ethic is not objective. Do you think the bias of the oppressed is a better bias?
8. Do you think analyzing narratives or studying relationships between entities is useful for ethics?
9. If a woman lovingly fells a tree because felling the tree makes her happy, would an ecofeminist consider her act moral?

Objections:

1. Warren does not address the issue of women dominating nature. Her arguments emerging from the logic of domination assume that women’s subjugation and nature’s subjugation are parallel and related occurrences. In contemporary times, they may not necessarily be related.
2. Her ecofeminist ethic is contextual, plural and process based. Her fluid ecofeminist ethic has limited practical utility for determining absolutes of moral behaviour.
3. She emphasizes that women and nature have been historically dominated, and assumes without explicitly stating that such domination necessarily continues today.
4. 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.
5. The women-nature domination link may not apply cross-culturally. For example, in parts of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, humans have worshiped and respected nonhuman nature, making it hard to draw a historical link between woman subjugation and nature’s subjugation.
6. Sexism may well be conceptually linked to naturism through the logic of domination. This does not necessarily mean feminism (a 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.
7. Warren’s ecofeminist ethic, by admission, is not objective. She does not adequately qualify why the views of the oppressed are a better bias.
8. A justice-based ethic that operates to correct the effects of the logic of domination serves interests of all entities, reducing the need for an ecofeminist bias.