



The Encounter of Woman and Nature with Man and Modernity: An Ecofeminist Study of Kavery Nambisan's *Mango Coloured Fish*

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DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.19627246

Submission Date: 22 Feb. 2026 | Published Date: 17 April 2026

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Abstract

This paper highlights the dignity for both women and nature. Women are similar to nature. She plays an important natural social force. Her contribution in the ecological movement and perform a unique role in social production. She nurtures and build up family. This awareness makes the status of women improve and the consciousness among women has been enhanced. Dignity for women will reduce the number of crimes against women in this civilized society as well as dignity for nature will carry greenery in this earth. Kavery Nambisan's Mango Coloured Fish is an excellent exploration of the trauma modernity caused contrary to tradition. The lifestyle of a middle –class woman, Sharada is sandwiched between tradition and modernity.

Keywords: *Woman, Ecology, Consciousness, Identity, Modernity.*

1. Introduction:

Ecofeminism is a theory that explores the strong relationship between women and ecology and endeavor for gender equality. It also poses environmental issues from a gender-conscious perspective. The term 'Ecofeminism' was initiated by the French writer Francoise d'Eaubonne in her book *Le Feminisme ou la Mort* (1974). Ecological consciousness is an important concept that examines the human connection to nature and it manifest in literature. Nature and literature already had a close relationship and was witnessed by the works of various writers. It explored further in the concept of spiritual connection between women and nature.

Ecofeminist theory asserts a feminist perspective of Green politics and how men dominate women and humans dominate nature. Women's liberation with the furtherance of eco-feminist ideas in the world, women have associated themselves in different environment movements. Ecofeminism glimpse from the eye of women rather than men. This accentuate on women's identity. The basic reason for gender inequality and gender oppression in social life is an ideology and its social cultural system is called patriarchy. In order to evade from gender subjugation and procure individuality and social status, we must persist on female principles and terminate androcentricism.

2. Discussion:

Ecofeminism is a new social movement to eliminate gender inequality and strive for women's liberation. Women need attention for making our society and earth beautiful in all respects. Kavery Nambisan was born in the coffee and spice district of Karnataka, she studied medicine at St. John's Medical College, Bangalore and later pursued her higher studies in England. One of the serious issues described in this novel *The Mango Coloured Fish* is patriarchal domination illustrates that in core family, the husband gets the opportunity to dominate his wife and his children. Patriarchy is a right hierarchy where the male dominates the female and then extends to all right relationships. In the patriarchal hierarchy, female culture is linked to the body, blood and flesh, material, nature, emotion and private fields, while male culture focuses on spirit, intelligence, sense, culture and public fields. It is a story of a girl called Shari, 22-years old narrator as

well as the protagonist of the novel *Mango Coloured Fish* by Kavery Nambisan. She is insurgent against the mandatory dissembling rules and regulations of the society and to create a path of her own family. The theme of this novel explores a quest for happiness and satisfaction in this incomplete world. This world is full of faulty where nothing is ideal or perfect, especially in the relationships of marriage.

The story of the novel deals with the close –knit, Tamil family Chettiars from Madras, staying in Delhi. The family consists of father, mother and her sister and her father affectionately called by her nickname often. Sharada as ‘Shari’ of the age of twenty-two. Young Shari always believes that her and Krishna’s identity in the family was merely at the periphery of things. She observes her status as: “Krishna and I hover at the periphery of things. We are the stitches that slipped out of a copy pattern” (4). Shari’s father was the Managing Director of a garment export firm and has a privilege of two office cars, a secretary and subordinates to follow his orders. He was very vigorous and assertive in his office transactions but his status in the family was apart from it and he was putty in his wife’s hands. Shari’s mother was different type of creature who has extravagant pride of superiority of Delhi culture and ashamed of being a Tamilian. She has immensely converted her father’s identity of Tamilian into Delhian.

However, Nambisan’s present protagonist appears totally different from them. While presenting this young protagonist, the author has chosen less trodden path. No doubt, she likes other protagonists, has faced predicaments, ordeals but her determination led her on the right track of life and mould her as a vigorous character. She wants to redefine her self-identity, desires to visualize self- discovery by visiting remote places to her dearest ones, and tried to perceive herself the concept of marriage institution before enter into it. Like every young girl’s mother, shari’s mother too is anxious for her future, her marriage and carry. Mother Bimmy is disappointed with her for all sorts of reason. One of them was that shari was not blessed with single feminine appearance at the same time her decision to be a KG teacher was also a jolt to her imagination. To some extent, Shari resembles to Anita Desai’s Uma of *Fasting- Feasting*, only difference is that Shari is not too submissive like Uma, but both have marriage predicaments.

Marriage is a phenomenon where a woman is repulsed the right to education, freedom and identity. As a result, Kavery Nambisan remarks in *Mango Coloured Fish*: ‘Marriage is a legal document on paper, saying who you are married to and when. From then on, in all the forms you fill, you write your name and besides that enter “Wife of---“While previously you entered, daughter of---.” A woman is always a wife or the daughter of someone. (121) Through the novel, Krishna emerges as a typical modern generation character, a workworm, imaginative and typical rebel. His was silent presence in Shari’s life as silent but formative. While her stay in Vrindaban, Shari came across a sign pasted on the side of wooden shelf as: MARRIAGE IS A MIRAGE, it appears her as a cautionary message. Later, Teji elaborates it on one occasion to Shari by saying: “Marriage is s mirage because people choose to see only the icing on the cake. Every person longs to meet another all the way. Even DNA is a double- stranded molecule, pair bonded with its mate. The best relationship improves with times” (56).

However, the life was appearing to Shari like odysseys, and she begins to define and redefine the meanings of the words like love and marriage, which perplexes her. Fleeing to Krishna and keeping distance from her parents and solitary ruminations help to poise herself, yet most of the time she appears fickle- minded and she spent few months pondering over her impending marriage and her present condition was like that of enigmatic state. Most of the occasions, Shari appeared as a baffled young girl. To her, the way object of affection became the source of disgust. It was her erratic behavior towards Gautam. As an elder brother, Krishna sometimes tries to advise her, inspire her and give her strength to rise over weakness in the life. He convinces her: “Tell you something. Marriage is certainty. You eat, talk, think, sleep, love and live a marriage together. Make it worthwhile. If it’s the uncertainties that are more appealing, it’s too early for marriage” (84-85).

Mostly, the chief ambition of every Indian girl is to get married into a wealthy family. A girl, if married into a respectable family, has children, and besides, if her husband’s family is economically sound, that is a big consolation for her as well as to her family. Unfortunately, marriage and family do not protect a woman or give her any distinction instead often her needs are disregarded. After all the humiliation, she is still expected to be virtuous, caring towards her husband, a duty-bound mother etc.

The protagonist, Sharada’s life is controlled by her mother but she could not refrain from her. Most of the protagonists in Kavery Nambisan’s novels try to create their identity for defeating the obstacle in their life. Sometimes women either harmonize with the situation or develop the firmness to take a stand against in unfortunate circumstances. “The tragedy of marriage is not that it fails to assure woman the promised happiness- there is no such thing as assurance in regard to happiness- but that it mutilates her; it dooms her to repetition as routine” says Simone De Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* (502).

Nambisan dissects the kind of freedom deeply into the mind of young women before and after marriage through the character of Shari. She mainly analyses the question of female identity within the domestic circle of family. Shari's blaze of discernment into others and herself is a symbolic journey into the inner interruption of her consciousness, of herself. It is an extraordinary self-discovery; richly textured and sensitively perceptive. She is sharp and witty. The 'inside' of Shari travels to external places and into different experiences in different times to piece herself together.

Woman writers boldly express their emotions and experiences with the connections of environment where she revolves around her which is also considered as trivial. This creates an opportunity to raise her consciousness among women. As a novelist, Kavary Nambisan brings to light all forms of social, political and economic issues which were highly exploited in their everyday life. Shari is a true Indian –yet and is unable to identify herself with the fast-changing, trend-conscious and hypocritical Indian upper- middle class values.

Nambisan's *Mango- Coloured Fish* is chosen in order to explore the protagonist's pre- marriage dilemma and incessant burdens loaded on her by the patriarchal forces. She also wants to define and trace out her self- identity, as well as self-discovery and while achieving it she has confronted loneliness, alienation status in her life. The present paper is modest attempt to highlight the aspects of marriage dilemma and its illusions and realities in youngster's life, which appears sometimes as an ordeal in their lives.

To some extent, it did not appear as a Shari's total rebel to patriarchal system but it appeared as self-assertion, she wanted to be free bird of her own will. She expressed her feelings in her own words: "I can feel myself leaping out of the cage. I have prisoned myself in savor the joy of being me. Where is the sense of living by someone else's rules? ... I started hearing my own thought a long time ago, now I am ready to listen and obey" (240).

In the end, Shari appeared to reject to live the life of pretence, reflecting the thought of other, which were imposed on her individually. On her last day in Delhi, she came back to Yash house to say goodbye. It was on that occasion; she decided to put off with her engagement with Gautam. She determinedly declared to Yash: "I've got the heebie- jeebies. Stage fright. Panic attack" (240). She firmly determined not to be like a fish in the glass bowl, which darts about in purposeless monotony, because the space was restricted to its freedom. Earlier in Yash's house, Shari was impressed after seeing the sunlight reflecting at the glass and water on fish, and while arguing about its colour as mango-coloured. Though for Shari the fish appears impressive in its mango-coloured, yet she did not want to restrict her own identity with that fish. She wanted to trace out her self- identity and freedom in this world. Thus, when once again she started her return journey for Madras, she was not the confused, jittery and fickle- minded.

Nambisan's *Mango- Coloured Fish* concludes with these beautiful lines – "If we suffer our little sorrows too much, we die in degrees, from the moment we're born" (240). The title of the book comes from an argument with her intimate friend Yash about the colour of the fish in her fish bowl. Finally, they concluded that it was a Mango- coloured fish. We all are treading in Mango – coloured waters not realizing that to each person one's problems seem the biggest and forgetting the larger reality that we all are the same, despite differences. Nambisan's *Mango Coloured Fish* explores the plight of voiceless women in India who go through the silence for their survival. The main idea of this novel highlights the search for truth and identity. The protagonist Shari is highly tattered between love and household, then she wants to dissect what is right and wrong, and the hypocrisy of Indian subculture and the independence of its western counterpart. In conclusion both nature and feminism have always been fruitful to human beings. Nature remains silent and serves all without expectation. Mother earth gives all a tranquil and calm life and man finds true pleasure at length. Her greatest gift to man is an ability to think.

3. Conclusion:

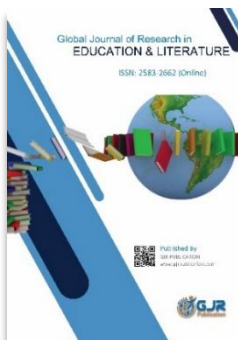
In conclusion, Kavary Nambisan's *Mango Coloured Fish* serves as a compelling narrative that intricately explores the intersections of gender, nature, and modernity through an ecofeminist lens. The novel not only sheds light on the struggles and resilience of its female protagonist but also critiques the patriarchal and modernist forces that disrupt both women's lives and the natural world. By juxtaposing the protagonist's journey with the broader environmental degradation, Nambisan crafts a touching critique of the dual exploitation inherent in patriarchal and modernist agendas. This study has highlighted how *Mango Coloured Fish* articulates a nuanced ecofeminist perspective, advocating for a harmonious coexistence between woman and nature against the backdrop of man and modernity. Ultimately, Nambisan's work underscores the urgency of addressing the intertwined fates of women and the environment, urging readers to reconsider the values and practices of contemporary society. It is a testament to the power of narrative in illuminating the vital connections between ecological sustainability and gender equality, making a significant contribution to ecofeminist discourse.

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CITATION

Banu, S. S., & Arunachalam, M. (2026). The Encounter of Woman and Nature with Man and Modernity: An Ecofeminist Study of Kavery Nambisan's Mango Coloured Fish. In *Global Journal of Research in Education & Literature* (Vol. 6, Number 2, pp. 92–95). <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19627246>



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