

**Tribhuvan University
Humanities and Social Sciences**

**A Relationship between Women and Nature:
An Eco-feminist Reading of Jonathan Franzen's *Freedom***

**A Thesis submitted to Central Department of English, TU
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Letter of Approval

This research work entitled “A Relationship between Women And Nature: An Eco-feminist Reading of Jonathan Franzen’s *Freedom*” submitted to the Central Department of English in TU Kirtipur by BashudevBhatta has been approved by undersigned members of the Research Committee.

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A Relationship between Women and Nature: An Eco-feminist Reading of Jonathan
Franzen's *Freedom*

Abstract:

This research paper primarily explores the interconnection between women and nature in American society in terms of oppression and subjugation in Jonathan Franzen's Freedom. In this fiction, Franzen unfolds the vulnerable position of women in American society in parallel with the feeble condition of nature because of the masculine and capitalist worldview in the early twenty-first century. The female characters are explicitly or implicitly subjugated in the text in the way natural forces have been mutilated with men's uncontrolled desire for material progress and prosperity. In Freedom, the scenic beauty of nature along the right to live of a cerulean song bird is encroached by the patriarchal agency in its collaboration with the capitalist economic enterprise. The inappropriate political gain has influenced the natural elements. Even the innocent children and youngsters are also impacted by war fares. This research paper examines the vulnerable condition of women along nature in the theoretical frame of eco-feminism. Moreover, it precisely brings in the theoretical insights and perspectives of socialist ecofeminism postulated by Françoise D'Eaubonne that concerns abolishing all forms of domination of all marginalized groups and oppression of nature. Thus, the research work explores the patriarchal-capitalist hegemony and control over women and nature. Eventually, the research concludes that the condition of women and nature in American society is almost the same as we can observe in the text.

Keywords: Eco-feminism, oppression, Environmental degradation, hegemonic masculinity, pro-feminist environmentalism, American values

This research paper explores the female-nature connection in Jonathan Franzen's *Freedom* from the perspective of Françoise D'Eaubonne's socialist ecofeminism. It investigates the homogeneity between nature and women in a sense of male domination and suppression due to masculinity. It also examines the subjugated condition of women and nature in American society. Also, this paper uncovers the forcefully overlapping of political impact over innocent creatures.

Freedom is a story of an ideal and middle-class Berglund family, particularly the parents Patty and Walter, as their lives develop and then their happiness falls apart due to patriarchal norms and values in American society. In the novel, there are some vital characters viz. Walter Berglund, a mild mannered and lawyer and environmentalist advocacy, and his wife Patty Berglund, a charming and youthful homemaker and an athlete, Joey Berglund and Jessica Berglund, two children of Berglund spouse, Connie Monaghan; with whom Joey gets sexually involved, a neighborhood teen, Richard Katz, a Walter's college mate and a successful rock musician who has love with Patty, Eliza, a Patty's college mate and another lady character Lalitha, a Walter's assistant.

Freedom follows the life of a Berglund couple in St. Paul Minnesota with their two children Joey and Jessica. It is simply telling the story of the Berglund family. It portrays the trials and temptations of married life. A sportswoman and a lawyer with awareness of environment protection are engaged in their own area of interest not concerned with their two growing children but both of them are fastened by social norms and values. Berglund is a socially prestigious family among all. The story goes on with the incidents that Joey happens to be sexually involved with a neighborhood teen named Connie Monaghan who is from a lower-class family. But they are restricted to be together by Berglund's spouse. Joey is a talent for money making.

Connie is sexually involved with Joey. As a result, the Berglund family is morally forced to abandon the indwelling from there.

On the one hand, Patty keeps an extramarital affair with his husband's college mate Richard. They are involved in multiple activities such as drinking and developing intimate relationships. Eventually, Patty marries Walter, she starts raising her family with him. On the one hand, Patty cannot forget her physical relationship with Richard. Consequently, Walter and Patty break their relationship and start living separate places without any connection. On the other hand, Walter develops an intimate relationship with his assistant Lalitha. They keep sexual relationships between themselves and enjoy their days whereas Patty is also enjoying her life lonely. But, Walter's only one son Joey is immensely impacted by the incident of 9/11. He blames such inhuman deeds. Their daughter Jessica is now focused in her career building that is not portrayed wrongly in the novel.

Freedom portrays natural phenomena too. The natural beauty of the Nameless Lake is concretized with buildings. Through the project of Cerulean Mountain Trust, Walter and Lalitha with the help of Richard, funded by a coal mining magnate, want to preserve its surroundings. The lake is a home to cerulean warbler, a song bird. The overpopulation and a body-armor manufacturer for the Iraq war are major causes of deteriorating natural habitat of the bird. The war is an intention to be powerful among all which is not necessary for withholding harmony and fraternity. Now Walter becomes able to use funding for the anti-overpopulation campaign which they name Free Space. Walter opposes the growth of population and his position is against body-armor factory, "Walter loses his temper on live TV at the inauguration of the new West Virginian body-armor factory" (222). He is against the government project

which is considered as an antibiotic. Walter supposes that the body-armor factory obviously deteriorates the natural beauty and the habitat of cerulean song birds.

This research work explores the subjugation of women and nature in American society. It unfolds the real image of women in their home superseded by men. In this research, the primary concern is analyzing how women are rejected by their families, even in their conjugal life when they sleep with another person whereas their husbands can easily perform such extramarital affairs outside in the same society. But women are forbidden to do so. Due to masculinity and hegemony of male domination, women seem more suppressed in American society given in the novel. Patty and her mother altogether reveal the difficulties that they are facing in their own family. American society does not allow women to be outside on their own. The patriarchal values and masculine thoughts have played a vital role behind the pathetic condition of females and nature is a major finding of this research work.

In doing so, this research paper employs a theoretical framework proposed by D'Eaubonne's *Feminism or Death: How the Women's Movement can save the Planet*. Several eco-feminists have made the distinction that it is not because women are females or feminine that they relate to nature, but because of their similar status of oppression by the same male dominant forces. The idea of theory is ecofeminism, a branch of feminism that sees environmentalism and the relationship between women and nature. She has drawn on the concept of gender to analyze the bonding between humans and the natural world. An American theorist Bob Pease elicits as "it is necessary to revisit women' relationship with nature through the lens of eco-feminism" (4). He further claims "what all ecofeminism shares in common, however, is the importance of linking ecological struggles with feminist struggles, all eco-feminists emphasize the connections between the treatment of women and the

treatment of nonhuman species and natural environment” (5). It means to say that ecofeminism measures both women and nature in the same scale which reflects their subjugation.

Mainly, eco-feminism concerns abolishing all forms of domination of all marginalized groups and oppression of nature. Furthermore, d’Eaubanne argues, “the oppression, domination, exploitation, and colonization from the western patriarchal society have directly caused irreversible environmental damage” (62). He illustrates more in his book as, “eco-feminism relates oppression and domination of all marginalized groups like women, people of color, children, the poor to the oppression and domination of nature like animals, land, water, air etc.” (42). Some discourses link women specifically to the environment because of their traditional role as a nurturer. Gradually, eco-feminism has grown out of the definition of mere women and environment. The concept of eco-feminism has been identified as a movement in the late 20th century that speaks for women, the environment and all marginalized groups. Out of three major wings of eco-feminism like Cultural/ spiritual Ecofeminism, Queer Ecofeminism and Socialist Ecofeminism, this study attempts to focus on Socialist Ecofeminism. In this light, PashupatiJha asserts that "Socialist ecofeminism stands somewhere in between Cultural and Construct Feminism. It neither accepts or rejects the natural connection between women and nature by emphasizing connection" (104). He further explicates that "Since the age of Enlightenment and the colonization of the world, the White Man's concept of emancipation of freedom and equality, is based on dominance over nature, and other peoples and territories" (105). The hegemony of power and politics seems to have been formulated at the age of colonization. Since that time, men knowingly and unknowingly, are imprisoning nature for their power checking and dominating the opposite sex to control them for their own comforts.

Many other researchers have also defined the theory of eco-feminism in their own work. In this context, Mouchang Yu analyzes:

The aims of the rights and promises of eco-feminism were to construct feminist theories, criticize masculinity and all anti-nature activities, oppose all oppression, get rid of the oppressive system, put a value on males governing female and human governing nature and give up this ethics of governing the environment. (8)

Through his research paper, Yu claims that ecofeminism is an important social ethics and social movement in contemporary society, “studying relationship between males controlling women and males controlling nature” (9). Franzen includes such issues in his novel where the masculinity as well as its impact is explicitly seen, so, he writes as “You may be poor, but the one thing nobody can take away from you is freedom to fuck up life whatever way you want to” (126). He further brings the exponent of Patty as “my mother gets angry at my outing; she wants to confine me inside the house” (138). In the same way, an Indonesian researcher Jamie Thompson further comments on her writing *Ecofeminism: The Path towards Healing the Earth* “Eco-feminist explores the connection between women and nature in culture, religion, literature and iconography and addresses the parallels between the oppression of nature and the oppression of women” (2). The research work points out the issue of liberty that is not found in the social context. However, women accept it to survive and adapt themselves within the male dominated society. Ultimately, time and circumstances demand and voice for emancipation.

The concept of Eco-feminism has also been used by many Nepalese researchers. Indira Acharya Mishra, in “Women and Nature in BP Koirala’s Sumnima: An Eco-feminist Study” argues that “Ecofeminism criticism the masculine domination

of feminine, it argues that it is the same masculine mindset which denies women their right to their bodies and sexuality, threatens and environment” (132). She further claims that patriarchal dualistic and oppressive mode of thinking has harmed both women and nature, “there are important connections between the oppression of women and the oppression of nature, the natural right to freedom and right to survive with willpower of both women and nature has been troubled by male dominated society” (135). Even in the novel, Patty has become habituated and used to being a lady within the four walls of the house, in contrast, she is athletic, and she goes out more and keeps extramarital affairs. But she tries to convince her husband to be a gentle lady or an orthodox woman at home. She argues furthermore as, “I want to live in a beautiful old house and have two children, she told Walter, I want to be a really, really a great mom” (51). In the same context, Walter asks her, “Do you want a career too?” (51) The questioning of Walter implies that men do not see a woman’s career which has made women as just homemaker or housewife, even if they have high potential in any field of their career. Patty responds to him as, “Raising children would be my career” (51). It symbolizes those women are also embedded by masculinity.

Similarly, Jamie Thompson also talks about eco-feminism as “It is clear that there is at least a societal connection between women and nature due to the link between the oppression of women and the oppression of earth” (3). So, Jamie tries to make clear about the linkage of the oppressions that happen in the epoch of women and nature. They came to realize about the inclined nature of men towards war, they were well known about the impact of masculinity. As a result, in the late 20th century, the term Ecofeminism was coined recently to refer to the numerous protests that were led by women that protested against ecological degradation.

Franzen's *Freedom* was written during the time of extreme tension between America and middle- East. On 11 September 2001, an Islamic extremist group Al-Qaeda attacked New York and Washington, D.C, causing extensive death and destruction in America. Further *Freedom* explicates an issue of politics of liberty in the family and society. As Franzen mentions that all kinds of artificial invasions, natural destruction and practices against nature are crimes. Joey is in opposition of Twin tower demolition in American, calls it a great genocide. All kinds of massacres harm not only the people but it deteriorates nature too. Contrarily, Franzen portrays all kinds of characters in his writing to uncover the theme of eco-feminism. Joey complains or dislikes genocide and twin diminution or other sorts of massacre in the society, Walter himself engaged in NAMELESS LAKE conservation campaign where warblers are found whereas the political authority or then president of USA motivates to establish Armors Industry by demolishing the natural habitat of the endangered birds.

In this regards, Margaret Hunt Gram writes in his article entitled "Freedom's Limits: Jonathan Franzen's the Realist Novel and the problem of Growth" claims as, "If you look it from the reviewers, there was something weirdly interrupted about the eco-politics of Franzen's novel *Freedom*"(298). Gram further argues that the New Republic's Ruth Franklin agreed that the stretches of freedom where the character Walter Berglund takes up population control as his cause were the most plodding and gratuitous. In the novel, Hunt tries to prove that the novel has a lot of interpretation on the basis of its purpose. Gram discusses again in his article that Walter fears overpopulation while his wife is overly dismissive of Walter's central concerns, arguing that everyone loves reproduction. Hunt elicits that Patty abhors sterilization and argues nobody really believes in over population anymore.

Similarly, another critic James Ley also opines as “*Freedom* is in other words, a novel that treats its characters reverently but subjects them to large structural ironies. Some of this is implied by chapters and sections, headings like ‘Good Neighbors’, ‘Mistakes were Made’, ‘Free markets Foster Competition’ which are heavily ironic to the point of sarcasm” (327). Ley explains that the titles carry a similar burden. It means that *Freedom* is concerned with the various ways in which its characters are not free. He adds, “The characters are not free, they are undone by their choices and their innate weakness” (327). But, there is an almost systematic aspect to their failures and disappointments. So, Ley tries to say that most of the characters are led by others. They will be released from them but cannot escape which shows that the research paper is trying to prove that freedom is necessary for both human beings and nature to play better roles during their life long journey.

Several newspapers have also been occupied by various critics on *Freedom*. Nicholas Lezard talks about the patriarchal influence on *The Guardian* she justifies that “In it we learn few things from the inside, most importantly that Patty was raped when a teenager, but that he presents, local political big wings, advised her not to proceed with any case because the rapist was a son of an even bigger wings” (2). Lezard further views as:

This story is told very well indeed with just the right inflection to ramp up our outrage and see why Patty cuts off almost all contact with her parents; but we wonder at times whether this really is Patty telling the story or simply Franzen being clever or not quite clever enough. She wants to be free from chores and settle down her athletic life on her own, so for a few times she enjoys with Franzen and keeps sexual relationships by the way and marries Walter. (2)

Nicholas uncovers the pro-patriarchal values. Patty's rape case is attempted to be shadowed, is seemed in his article. So, the paper proves that female characters are edged by patriarchal dominating American society. The Americans are indifferent with the sentiment of women. They see the women as sign value and use them as sex toys. They commoditized them for sexual exploitation. If a woman will get freedom in such issues like sex, entertainment and the aim of life, she can never be accepted by her family. Patty is more anxious with her family responsibilities, even though she is athletic. She wants to keep a sexual relationship with Richard, a best mate of her husband. As the theorists, d'Eaubanne argues, "the oppression, domination, exploitation, and colonization from the Western patriarchal society have directly caused irreversible environmental damage" (62). He illustrates more in his book as, "eco-feminism relates oppression and domination of all marginalized groups like women, people of color, children, the poor to the oppression and domination of nature like animals, land, water, air etc." (42). It can be said that the marginalized groups like females, children and wild animals are most affected by male chauvinism.

In the same way, David L. Ulin expresses his ideas through the renowned newspaper *The Los Angeles Times* as, "*Freedom* is more than just the story of Berglund's fall. Indeed, they are the tip of the iceberg, a filter through which to explore the unresolved tensions, the messiness of emotion of love and a longing that possesses even the most fully ordinary lives" (2). In this excerpt, it is shown that a female character Patty is confined within social values, so she wants to be free from it to live willfully. Likewise, Ulin puts forward his views regarding nature, he says that "Walter is a perfect case in point: An executive with the Nature conservancy, he leaves to run the Cerulean Mountain Trust which uses the language of conservation to justify mountain-removal mining and complicity with military contracts" (4).

Of course, one does not just take it from the reviewers. Still, somewhere in this critical mass of complaints, is an interesting collective observation which is that there exists a formal incongruity between the parts of *Freedom*. In this light, Margaret Hunt claims “*Freedom* is an investigating genre that touches upon overpopulation and the parts that touches upon other totalizing political problems, from sexual violence to the nightmare of imperial war” (295). Further, Hunt admits that “*Freedom* reaches these other problems by plotting them by having its characters encounter them as experiences or dilemmas” (298). In this way, the sexual violence of women and the deterioration of natural resources viz. Cerulean birds are caused by political totality.

Likewise, Lara Narcisi in "At Least This Is an Actual Place: the Places and Displacements of Freedom" claims *Freedom* is a product of contemporary American society. She exposes that “Freedom interrogates this term from multiple perspectives and questions its resonances in our post 9/11 age” (1). It was the time of the tenure of George W. Bush and 9/11 in America. Narcissi further argues, “Franzen’s epic explores the paradox of the pursuit of American freedom causing the very omnipresent dislocation and ruthlessness, it purports to resolve, like the warbler bird in the manmade preserve, contemporary Americans are constantly moving and yet invariably finding themselves confined” (70). He blames the politicians and complains of humans’ freedom of life in American society. He states, “Freedom examines the microcosmic desire to impact our spaces, from killing birds to killing Iraqis-for ourselves, for our families, for our friends, - as indicative of an intrinsic and destructive passion for exercising our freedom in ways that make no one free”(71). Narcisi precepts, at the time of the novel's publication, that American society was destroying nature for their personal gains. All Americans were fighting for freedom; more specifically women are fighting for their personal freedoms from their family

values, the other citizens want to do so for their own interests rather than the political interests of the rulers. The youngsters are willing to get solace in their life because they are extremely fed up with gun powders and machines.

Narcissi is talking about Patty's revolution for expelling traditional gender roles and she also points out the degradation of the natural world too. She argues as "The novel is filled with the violence of the natural world-even Walter's most beloved birds, bitterns are described as ruthless killers-and with the violence committed in attempts to protect it, and Walter mountaintop removal funded sanctuary" (78). In the novel, Walter plays the role of environmentalist. He is an advocate of the environment. At first, Walter is content to think globally and act locally by biking to work and promoting environmental causes. Narcissi argues in his article "As passionate environmentalist, Walter thinks almost carelessly about the greater good, experiencing guilt over everything from fishing the toilet unnecessarily to procreating too early and often" (88). As the mouthpiece of Franzen, Walter positions himself as a preserver of nature. He denotes letting the animals be free in their natural habitat.

In *Freedom*, characters are still figuring out how to live, which is not entirely a case of their stumbling towards a truth as evident to the author or the reader. Paul Jenner explains in his article as "the sense of freedom gives more attention to the impact of 9/11 on Joey than any of the other characters, his involvement as college student with national defense contradicts selling obviously inadequate spare vehicle parts of the military" (34). In this regard, Joey says, "Gotten be free, so free yeah, yeah, yeah, can't live without my freedom, yeah, yeah" (154). It seems that each and every character needs liberty which has been hampered due to patriarchal norms and values in the social sphere. M. Greif Suggests that *Freedom* "takes up a form of American liberalism that doesn't yet have a name: liberalism as niceness, tracing the

agony of liberalism-as niceness in an era that publicly rejected it” (124). It means to say that people in America want to get freedom everywhere. Likewise, *Freedom* itself can be regarded as “a work of therapy on deep unarticulated crises of America but a cure at odds with the ‘culture of therapy’ that is just supposed to make you happy” (130). So, the whole elements in *Freedom* seek liberty which is on the palm of male. From street to stage, only males are there on power. They have controlled the politics and social sphere which dominated everything around them.

In this regard, PashupatiJha writes as “Socialist ecofeminism stands somewhere in between Cultural and Construct Feminism. It neither accepts or rejects the natural connection between women and nature by emphasizing connection” (104). So, American society indulges mostly in exploitation of nature and marginalized groups. They overlap masculinity in every part of the earth. This research work reveals the society that is portrayed in the literary text written by Franzen where people and natural elements are badly exploited for the sake of political gains.

Walter is a lawyer who is actively engaged in environmental causes and works for the Nature Conservancy, but his main ‘mission’ is to support an organization called Cerulean Mountain Trust” (269). The organization aims at saving the cerulean warblers, a small species of songbird, creating a bird’s century in West Virginia. “The honorable cause is actually moved by Vin Haven, a Texan millionaire tycoon who wants to implement an extractive coal strip mining operation or mountaintop removal (MTR)” (345). Barbara claims “A Cancer on the Planet: Mountaintop Removal and Environmental Crime in Jonathan Franzen’s *Freedom*” as, “to human purposes by advancing technologies and burgeoning populations, which have now brought us to what many fear is the brink of global ecological collapse” (345). Due to

overpopulation and advancement of technology, nature is deteriorating. Hence, Walter claims that we should control overpopulation.

Barbara views again in her article as, “Walter has a totally opposite conception of what is men’s role within the natural context. His obsession since youth, as *Freedom* shows in the first chapters, is over populations. As a young man he was involved with the club of Rome against letting everybody starve to death or kill each other” (350). In *Freedom*, Franzen writes as:

Nobody, state, federal or private, wants to touch a project that involves sacrificing mountain ridges and displacing poor families from their ancestral homes. They don’t want to hear about forest reclamation, they don’t want to hear about suitable sustainable green jobs, Wyoming country is very, very empty the total numbers of families directly impacted by our plan is less than two hundred. But the whole thing turned into Evil Corporation versus the helpless common man. (267)

The novel gives very vivid ideas of the continual, cumulative desire to develop and exploit the planet’s remaining resources. The authorities are not concerned with nature. The governing system is indifferent to the deterioration of wildlife.

Nonetheless, a private actor such as Walter seems to hope to promote conservancy.

According to him:

The land is disappearing so fast that it’s hopeless to wait for the government to do conservation. The problem with governments is they’ve elected majorities that don’t give a shit about biodiversity. They have got a stake in keeping the planet not entirely fucked, because they and their heirs are going to be the ones with enough money to enjoy the planet. (266)

To conclude the idea, the government elected by majority does not care about the biological needs of nature. Mostly male are in the position who indifferences the right to liberty of nature and women. Similarly, ThorunGullaksen Henderson depicts about the choice of freedom in his article “The Paradox of Freedom in Jonathan Franzen’s Freedom” as:

Patty leads an unhappy life as a consequence of too much freedom. She is not able to make good choices, and when she makes them, it is clearly the wrong ones, in the sense that they don’t make her happy. She had been feeling that she is wonderfully free being drunk for the first time but she gets raped at her sixteen by a boarding school senior. (321)

Henderson means to say that Patty, after her separation from Walter, is not able to live peacefully. Patty’s mother does not allow her to live alone. Richard is also questioning her why she left the family. Richard enjoys her, not making her free from conjugal life. So, women are more subjugated by masculine thought that has shaped society.

Handerson again claims that Patty embraces her free choice of physical relationship with Richard. They enjoy at Nameless Lake which is now concretized. Modernity looks out of control there. But, one side of society seems ugly. Nature looks like a blurring. He views as:

Her escapes become escapism as her relationship with Richard is finally consummated in the cabin by Nameless Lake, sexual freedom, a potent emblem of free choice, modernity and urbanization, eventually manifests itself within the free space of nature creating rupture between Walter and Patty. (321)

In the same way, MithaiMindra writes in her article as, “the dominance of finance, the political power of the super-rich, and the decline of the middle class...this new wave tends to see government as subsidiary, with the main societal choices occurring within the economic sphere” (312). The monetary value occupies everything in the society. The female natural elements are used as a source of earning.

Likewise, another couple of writers Michael H. and Leila M. examines *Freedom* through their perspectives in the article entitled “The Revolution of postmodernism: Aesthetics of Reality and Trust in Jonathan Franzen’s *the Corrections and Freedom*” as “the novel represents the global capitalism, the environmental degradation and technological crises” (300). They explain, “Freedom connects private and public politics with individual and social psychology to reflect contemporary themes” (301). In his writing, Franzen views as “But, there is a place for leaders in a society too, right? Wasn’t that what corporate America was trying to suppress at the Grammys? The voice of potential leaders of an anti-war movement, by creating the questions, the USA seems to invade Iraq, are you saying you supported the invasion of Iraq?” (107). The writer is trying to hint us that the USA is a war hawk country. Political leaders are mostly male. They reveal male chauvinism through political activities. Consequently, the innocent creatures and women are affected by such inhuman deeds.

Specifically, the theoretical parameter ecofeminism deals with the condition of the environment and women. D’Eaubonne views, “eco-feminism sees a relationship between the serious environmental damage done to the earth and the repression of women” (68). Regarding the issue raised in the paper, Lara Narsici further argues, “Franzen’s epic novel explores the paradox of the pursuit of American freedom causing the very omnipresent dislocation and ruthlessness, it purports to resolve. Like

the warbler bird in the manmade preserve, contemporary Americans are constantly moving and yet invariably finding themselves confined” (70). Both the social freedom of females and the natural freedom of warbler birds are by product of American values. The women pursue freedom in society from traditional Victorian values and the American society wants to preserve the wildlife in their artificial conservation.

In the novel, Patty does not want to be confined within her conjugal life. She keeps physical relationship with Richard as she convinces him as “Trust me on this one. I have no interest in kissing Walter” (94). In response Richard utters, “You’d see me naked when I’m forty-five, and you’d be thinking, Patty nodded, ‘So, you actually wanted to sleep with me that night.’ Yeah, a lot but not just sleep with you. Talk to you. Listen to you. That was difference” (94). This shows that Patty’s sexual desire is tried to cap, Walter doesn’t allow his wife to sleep with Richard, “For Walter, especially it was a very giddy time, he took possession of the girl he wanted, then who could have gone with Richard but had chosen him instead” (70). Hence, the research proves how American people are intoxicated to be towered above women politically and psychologically.

Franzen writes in *Freedom* “You may be poor, but the one thing nobody can take away from you is freedom to fuck up life whatever way you want to” (126). He further writes as the exponent of Patty “my mother gets angry at my outing; she wants to confine me inside the house” (138). Likewise, the writer talks about the masculinity inside the characters mind too as:

Walter had never liked cats. They’d seemed to him the sociopaths of the pet world, a species domesticated as an evil necessary for the control of rodents and subsequently fetish zed the unhappy countries fetishes their militaries, saluting the uniforms of killers as cat owners stroke their animals’ lovely fur

and forgive their claws and fangs He'd never seen anything in a cat's face but simpering incuriosity and self-interest; you only had to tease one with a mouse-toy to see where it's true heart lay cats were all about using people.

(167)

According to an American theorist Bob Pease "if there is a 'bad' essence in men; there is little scope for transforming men, masculinities, and male culture. However, men have material interests in every ecological element, the same as women." (5). As above mentioned, Mouchang Yu remarks:

The aims of the rights and promises of eco-feminism were to construct feminist theories, criticize masculinity, and all anti-nature activities, oppose all oppression, get rid of the oppressive system, put a value on males governing female and human governing nature and give up this ethics of governing the environment. (8)

It means to say that men want to dominate as they desire everything around them by birth. Walter dislikes cats or other pet animals; he sees material value on them. He even has control over his wife Patty, she says as "I guess my life has not always been happy or easy, or exactly what I want. At a certain point, I just have to try not to think too much about certain things, or else they'll break my heart" (177). Though she is not happy, Patty wants to be free from her conjugal life.

Berglund 's only son Joey also happens to approach a neighboring girl, Connie. They love each other. They prefer to live together. But they are not accepted by the Berglund family. Specially, Patty resists them Franzen says as, "in Ramsay Hill, according to Patty, the lesson that Joey had learned from his incessant arguments with Walter were that children were compelled to obey parents because parents had the money"(5). Joey is supposed to follow the orders as "Patty insists that he honors

his mother's wishing to reward him for being a good son" (5). Joey is independent and talented in making money. He becomes sexually involved with Connie, "When exactly Connie and Joey started fucking was not known" (5). The American values and Victorian societal norms resist Joey and his involvement with a lower-class girl Connie.

Patty and Walter are totally different by nature. They are in the same poles of the magnate. They are living together but do not seem to be connected by heart. Likewise, their two children Joey and Jessica are also at a different pace of life. Joey is physically and emotionally involved with Connie. It shows that every person is willing to be free. They need freedom. Nobody is satisfied with being confined within social norms and values. An American theorist Bob Pease elicits as "it is necessary to revisit women's relationship with nature through the lens of eco-feminism" (4). He further says "what all eco-feminisms share in common, however, is the importance of linking ecological struggles with feminist struggles. All Eco feminists emphasize the connections between the treatment of women and the treatment of nonhuman species and the natural environment" (5). So, Franzen tries to show that women and new generations will get freedom as much as it is needed for natural elements.

In the novel, though Patty's mother is a politician and social activist, she acknowledges as Franzen writes "I guess my life hasn't always been happy or easy or exactly what I wanted at a certain point, I just have to try not to think too much about certain things or else they will break my heart" (202). It reveals that even the powerful women are suppressed in American society. The values prevalent in this society are practiced for a long time and make a deep sense of influence in the day-to-day life of people. Some issues and norms automatically rule over us, even if they are blindly supported by powerful women for their existence. A renowned author Yu

Mouchangwrites in her article as, “one form of eco-feminism takes it very literally, saying that women are viewed in the same way as natural resources: as something to be taken, plundered, or used” (3). So, the research work figures out a transparent view about the condition of women and nature in today’s world.

Throughout the college life in the University of Minnesota where Patty continued her successful basketball career, with her alienation from her political family, she came to be date-raped by a boy named Ethan Post. Franzen says “being a very agreeable person, however, she went on dates with practically anybody who asked with an unpopular boy. As far as actual sex goes, Patty’s first experience of it was being raped at a party when she was seventeen” (17). The women are taken as sexual tools in this society, when Patty is raped, she cries a lot, her coach suggests her to imprison the rapist. But she denies as Franzen says “He raped me like it was nothing; I am probably not even the first” (21). She further argues, “Maybe, I guess, if he apologized in a really sincere way, that might be enough” (21). The way Patty takes sex as a normal phenomenon, men don’t take it. So, it means to say that women in American society are submissive. They can’t go against male domination. Hence the theories d’Eaubanne argues, “The oppression, domination, exploitation, and colonization from the Western patriarchal society have directly caused irreversible environmental damage” (62). The social structure is also the same as the males are superior to females in terms of responsibility.

In course of time, at University of Minnesota, while Patty meets an attractive indie rock musician named Richard Katz and his roommate Walter Berglund. Later, he married Walter. He makes a lot of attempts to pull her interest towards him, “Walter tried everything he could think of to make sex better for her except the one thing that might conceivably have worked” (76). Patty was more attractive with

Richard Katz. Richard celebrates his vacation with the Berglund family. “He had no relationship with his mom; she hadn’t even come to his dad’s funeral” (72). Richard chanted poetry consisting mostly of guitar while he was with Patty. Patty sleeps with him. Franzen writes as “Welcome to Patty land, Mistake lands” (94). Again, he writes: “He looked at her then, and he smiled, and the room filled (metaphorically) with sunshine, He was, in her opinion, a very beautiful man” (94). The research work examines those women are exploited by men for their own profit, success and pleasure. To survive in the same situation, women are not free to choose their natural right to reproduction or search for a sex mate.

Apparently, it seems Patty keeps physical relationship with Richard while her college days are running. She lives with her friend Eliza who is closer to Richard. Shortly after finally detaching herself from Eliza, Patty suffers a career-ending knee injury, so she wants to be a housewife. Franzen writes as, “By default, because her mother had been, in Patty’s opinion, a substandard parent, Patty was inclined to want to be a homemaker and an outstanding mother” (51). She adds more as, “I want to live in a beautiful old house and have two children, she told Walter, I want to be a really, really a great mom” (51). Similarly, Walter asks her, “Do you want a career too?” She responds as, “Raising children would be my career” (51). The conversation reflects the inherited quality or ideology of women in the society that they don’t want to go outside throwing away their social duties. She would rather love to live with Richard but he trips to New York. Failing to do so, she settles down with Walter. The women are not only led by men, they are also under the surveillance of patriarchal norms and values. They have become used to in male dominating thought.

Despite raising a family with Walter, Patty was unable to forget her physical attraction to Richard which was assumed to be defamatory in American Society.

Likewise, Walter is also not seen untouched on this sexual matter with his personal official assistant Lalitha, “Walter said, fuck the authorization! We need to get through here! I own this fucking land, do understand that? I own everything you can see here” (138). Even, they drink together. They are working in the same plate form, “Let’s get a drink! We can go to the best place in town and have a massage, said Lalitha” (125). At last, Walter’s fiancé Lalitha dies in a car accident.

Eventually, Patty betrays Walter in a brief affair with Richard during a stay at the Berglund’s vacation house located on an unnamed lake in Minnesota. In about six years after their marriage, Patty and Walter were altered in their living. Patty lived alone away from her family. “But also, to be honest, she was furious with Walter. However painful it had been for him to read certain pages of her autobiography. Patty did love Walter, whereas Richard is not the sort of person who can really love anyone” (422). Patty, as a liberal woman, wants to be free from family tortures. Nowadays, the suppressed beings don’t want to be undertaken by anything or anybody. Patty further notices that Lalitha, a young assistant of Walter, appears to be deeply in love with Walter, and also learns from Walter that his marriage with Patty, who has been suffering from depression, is deteriorating. At the end, she comes to know about the conjugal life of Patty and Walter.

For several months after her split with Richard, Patty stayed with her college basketball friend, until her father was suddenly diagnosed with cancer. After traveling home to see him again in his final days, Patty visits each of her siblings to negotiate a compromise. Her separation from her husband caused the siblings to become closer to each other despite their differences. Gradually, she redeems her relationship with her family. Her son Joey is successful in his business and her daughter Jessica has focused on a career in publishing. Now, she can run to Richard who is comfortable

with his success, however, he convinces her to get in touch with Walter so that their conjugal life does not be at risk.

In the novel, major three towering figures like Richard, Joey and Walter, all of them have a distinct masculinity. They are embedded with patriarchal values. Richard has finally got a great commercial success with his breakthrough album Nameless Lake. He burns through his new found money, “that Nameless Lake had made the perfect little Christmas gift to leave beneath tastefully trimmed trees in several hundred thousand NPR-listening households” (105). Similarly, Walter, who has been working in Washington D.C for the Cerulean Mountain Trust which is funded by a coal mining magnate, wants to strip mine a section of West Virginia territory before turning it into a preserve for the cerulean warbler, a song bird. There seems, “the kid was waiting in his practice room with an Apple laptop with a printed list of questions” (104). In LeilaZein’s perception:

Social ecofeminism advocates the liberation of women through overturning economic and social hierarchies that turn all aspects of life into a market society that today even invades the womb. We cannot work for justice and challenge the oppression of nature, without understanding that the most frequent way we interact with nature is by eating animals. (17)

Through the MP3 revolution, the politicians of America want to establish the armor company as Franzen indicates: “But, there is a place for leaders in a society, too, right? Wasn’t that what corporate America was trying to suppress at the Grammys? Was that the voices of potential leaders of an antiwar movement? By creating the questions, the USA seems to invade Iraq, are you saying you supported the invasion of Iraq?” (107). Joey is living a new life as he is studying at University of Virginia. He blames the September 11 attacks and its effect on people around him since he

wants peace and freedom in American society. Franzen writes as “In the days 9/11, everything suddenly seemed extremely stupid to Joey” (118). Like Joey, many other teenagers are not in favor of political tension with the Middle East, “The four liberal kids in Joey’s hall had endless stupid arguments with the twenty conservative kids, as if anybody cared what a bunch of eighteen-year-olds thought about the Middle East” (119). The research work concludes that political indulgence of rulers has influenced innocent people and nature. Warfare and battlefield are nonsense, purposeless and futile which are just by product of masculinity.

Eventually, Walter separates himself from his wife Patty. He resettles in CanterBridge Estates Lake, which is now renamed. He is obsessed with preventing his house cats from killing birds nesting on his property Franzen writes:

Walter had never liked cats. They’d seemed to him the sociopaths of the pet world, a species domesticated as evil necessary for the control of rodents and subsequently fetish zed the way unhappy countries fetishes their militaries, saluting the uniforms of killers as cat owners stroke their animals’ lovely fur and forgive their claws and fangs. (428)

According to the famous critic LailaFarihaZein views about materialist ecofeminism as “eco-feminism as materialist is another common dimension eco-feminism, a material view connects some institutions such as labor, power and the source of domination over women and nature” (8). Franzen writes the biodiversity is unique in its nature, but people take it in their own way.

In *Freedom*, both Patty and Joey are struggling for their right to liberty. On the one hand, Walter binds his wife within the social values or Victorian values and on the other hand, their only son Joey indulges with a neighboring lady as well as distracts with the Iraq war and then political scenario in America. In *Freedom*, Walter

views as “She had so much free time I could see that it was killing her” (228). Patty’s response indicates her lack of fulfillment, “and sixteen hours a day at home for twenty years? Unpaid? Does that not count? Was that just a favor? Raising your kids? Working on your house?” (329). It shows that Patty doesn’t want to be confined within the four walls of the house. Franzen tries to show that the women are crossing the borders of Victorian values in American society. Walter makes a dichotomy between his two stand points. Franzen writes as he is not accepting her wife sleeping with his close mate Richard whereas he is himself sleeping with Lalitha, Patty is not against his extra-marital affair. So, the paper proves that American male ideology contemplates women's freedom. They prioritize their own interests rather than the female or opposite sex. They don’t believe in the opposite sex.

As Francoise explains, “Eco-feminism links ecology with feminism. It sees the domination of women as steaming from the same ideologies that bring about the domination of the environment” (56). Even Franzen himself accepts that the natural resources are used for the sake of their financial gains. They dominate nature to make power and control over others in their favor and they commoditize it for political victory mostly. He views as "warbler birds can just habitat in the surrounding of that lake which give a favorable environment to them." (135). Franzen further claims "The natural resource like Nameless Lake is renamed there in the novel. The biological right has deteriorated" (145). We can say the American rulers do what they can do for achieving their domination over other innocent people of the world. To participate in the Vietnam War, they needed arms and weapons for their soldiers. So, they displace the natural habitat of warbler birds being indifferent with nature. The surrounding of Lake is overpopulated as Franzen remarks, “when the injury that Canter bridge Estates had inflicted on his lake was compounded by the insult of its

residents' free-roaming pets" (429). So, the research paper finds out that the natural resources are violated by men in order to fulfill their material purposes. In the novel, Walter runs a campaign against human overpopulation which can help to deteriorate nature too. Franzen exclaims as:

The mike had gone dead, we were adding thirteen million human beings to the population every month. Thirteen million people kill each other in competition over finite resources! And wipe out every other living thing along the way! It is a perfect fucking world as long as you don't count every other species in it! We are a cancer on the planet! Cancer on the planet! (157)

Hence, Walter is an Environmental Advocate. He is working for conservation of nature. But, in an interesting contrast, his eventual girlfriend Lalitha fails to appreciate nature as she says, "I don't think I really get nature to me; it seems like such a violent thing" (490). Lalita and Patty both are victims of male-chauvinism. They are unknown about the gender exploitation above them. Allocating chores to Patty, Walter enjoys with Lalitha outside of the home.

Thus, the research work seeks that we should not be a barrier of nature and its natural right; let's leave it as it is. Similarly, a woman is a critical gender, a kind of earth where everything can grow up who mostly wants to be exposed with her free will. d'Eaubanne argues, "The oppression, domination, exploitation, and colonization from the Western patriarchal society have directly caused irreversible environmental damage"(62).As Jamie Thompson talks about eco-feminism "It is clear that there is at least a societal connection between women and nature due to the link between the oppression of women and the oppression of earth" (3). It means to say that the paper shows a dichotomy in the relationship of exploitation between women and nature. American society treats women as similar to natural resources. They don't care about

the intensive sentiments of animals, birds and other creatures while using it for their sake.

In a nutshell, the research work uncovers the theme of male dominance over women and nature through the perspective of eco-feminism in *Freedom* which carries the motive of a high overriding of patriarchal norms and values in American society. By bringing authentic references, the research work has proven the statement of problem embedding the theoretical parameters of eco-feminism in regards to the issue that is raised in the paper. The accomplishment of dissertation has come to the point of correlation between women and nature that is given in the primary text implicitly. In the research work, the school of thought about Eco-feminism according to Francoise D'Eaubonne, is a theory that tries to evaluate the interconnection between women and nature looking through the glass of two schemes: feminism and ecology. The vital issue "The Relationship between Woman and Nature" is examined through the spectacle of eco-feminism. The school of thought of Eco-feminist coined by Francoise D'Eaubonne basically analyzes the issue of political and social oppression against women and economically victimization of nature for gaining a short-time purpose is accomplished in this research work. In the novel, it seems that women are treated differently by the society and even by their own family and friends on one hand and on the other hand, the habitat of Cerulean bird and the territory of Nameless Lake is being encroached by high figures of national politics and billionaires just because power gaining and financial success through establishing mining company. Thus, the research work has primarily focused on to prove its main ideas with ample references from various perspectives.

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