

# Jal-Jungle-Jameen: A Qualitative Study of Adivasi Women and the Ecology of Resistance in Jharkhand

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## ABSTRACT

This qualitative interpretive study examines ecological resistance of Adivasi women, using documented cases and secondary archival sources, through the lens of ecofeminism and postcolonial theory. It aims to study how the struggle for Jal-Jungle-Jameen moves beyond environmental activism to include cultural survival, ancestral memory and political sovereignty. The study draws on documented case studies (Koel-Karo Movement, Saranda Forest resistance, Natarhat Field Firing Range protest and everyday ecological practices) and secondary archival sources marking a contextual mapping of Jharkhand's ecological and cultural landscapes. These are studied to explore the lived experiences and narratives of Adivasi women. The findings, derived from systematic thematic analysis of the selected cases, suggest that Adivasi women are not passive victims of ecological violence but rather central actors in resisting deforestation, mining, displacement and state-led interventions. Their strategy makes use of rituals, festivals and protests, transmitting traditional ecological knowledge through oral traditions. This resistance constitutes an ecology of resistance where cultural identity, spirituality and environmental care converge. The study also shows how women's struggles complicate traditional ecofeminist claims emphasizing historically situated labor, kinship and spiritual ecology. The research concludes that the struggles of Adivasi women in Jharkhand represent a hybrid model of resistance combining environmental justice with cultural continuity and postcolonial critique. Their defense of Jal-Jungle-Jameen is not only ecological but also ontological. Recognizing the roles of Adivasi women is key to reimagining ecofeminism, environmental humanities and future of ecological justice.

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**Keywords:** Adivasi women, Jharkhand, ecofeminism, environmental resistance, Jal-Jungle-Jameen, Indigenous Knowledge, postcolonial ecology, ecological justice

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## INTRODUCTION

For much of the Jharkhand society, places like the Rajmahal hills, Hundru Falls or the Mandro Fossil Park are mere tourist sites. For Adivasi women, these spots are not merely tourist locations but are integral to identity, functioning as extensions of lived ecological and cultural relations. The relationship between earth, body and forest forms the symbolic structure within which the Adivasi women interact with the world. As the Indian state, and its postcolonial regime, continues the extraction and development of the tribal region, the relationship between the Adivasi women and the trio are threatened. Yet, they have not given in to becoming passive victims of ecological violence but have emerged as key figures in challenging deforestation, displacement and environmental degradation.

The landscapes in which they live are not mere geographical entities rather an active participant where the role of tribal women echoes. This qualitative study analyses the resistance displayed by the Adivasi women making a study of their roles, narratives and struggles through the lens of

ecofeminism. While industrialization and development blur the cultural and ecological consequences of infrastructure, it is often women, particularly within tribal communities, who disproportionately bear the consequences of these disruptions. The struggle for protection of forest, land rights and their spiritual sovereignty in Jharkhand has often been led by Adivasi women. Their resistance to social disruptions occurs in many forms such as organizing village level forest protection committees, transmitting traditional ecological knowledge through oral traditions and practicing sustainable rituals. This constitutes what this paper identifies as the ecology of resistance, a form of living and resistance, which is quite literally rooted in land and inseparable from the body and the forest.

These analyses align with ecofeminist theory where thinkers like Shiva (1988) and Agarwal (1992) argue that the relationship between women and nature is not essentialist but socially situated, especially when understood in indigenous context where survival, care and environmental ethics are correlated. Thus, their resistance is not limited to the environment or politics rather deeply embodied in their way of life. Their struggle against forest loss is also a struggle for cultural continuity, reproductive autonomy and ancestral memories. Postcolonial theory also reminds us that these struggles are shaped by colonial dispossession, bureaucratic forest management and modern-day neoliberal statecraft (Nixon, 2011; Huggan & Tiffin, 2010).

The paper focuses specifically on the forested regions of Jharkhand- Saranda, Latehar, Gumla and Rajmahal, where Adivasi women continue to defend ancestral territories against mining and state encroachment conceptualizing forests not just as land but as a living repository of identity. This makes their resistance not only political but also ontological- challenging the meaning of development and governance. This study also contributes to a broader rethinking of environmental politics in postcolonial India by highlighting the voices, practices and world view of Adivasi women. In a world, alienated from ecological roots, the relation between the Earth-Body-Forest implemented by the Adivasi women is an urgently needed model of resistance and regeneration.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Ecofeminism, Indigenous resistance and Environmental Justice combine a rich intersection of gender ecology and politics; yet remains uneven in its engagement with the lived realities of the Adivasi women of Jharkhand. Ecofeminist studies link exploitation of women to the exploitation of nature and at the same time Indigenous studies state that land is an active participant rather than passive observers in a community. In an Indian context, these paradigms intersect with issues of caste, class and offer a fertile ground for understanding the environmental struggles of Jharkhand. Hence, this paper examines key contributions from ecofeminist theories, Indigenous environmental activism and postcolonial ecocriticism.

### **Ecofeminism: Global and Indian Perspectives**

Ecofeminism emerged in the late 1970s and early 1980s as a critical framework uniting ecological and feminist concerns. Foundational works such as *Ecofeminist Philosophy* (Warren, 2000) and *Ecofeminism* (Mies & Shiva, 1993) suggested that patriarchal capitalist systems simultaneously oppress women and degrade the environment. Vandana Shiva's writings situate women as custodians of ecological knowledge in both rural and agrarian contexts (Shiva, 1988). The Chipko Movement led by women such as Gauri Devi resisted commercialization by hugging trees. Bina Agarwal warns against the portrayal of women as being closer to nature, rather advocates for a political ecology that places emphasis on power structure, property rights and socioeconomic equalities (Agarwal, 1992). This is particularly relevant to Jharkhand where land alienation, mining and industrial projects affect Adivasi women.

## **Indigenous Women and Environmental Resistance in Asia**

The central role played by Indigenous women's environmental resistance in South Asia which factors resource management, food sovereignty and ecological justice. Studies from Assam, Odisha and Chhattisgarh reveal that women are often at the frontlines against displacement caused by dams, mining and deforestation. Archana Prasad and Walter Fernandez document the socio-economic disruption caused by extractive industries in Jharkhand, noting that it is women who face the brunt of loss of agricultural land and access to clean drinking water due to these activities (Fernandez, 2008; Prasad, 2016). The Koel-Karo movement saw the Adivasi women deploy blockades against hydroelectric projects from 1970 to 2000 (Indian Social Institute, 2000). Similarly, the protest against Netarhat Field Firing Range (1994-2005) and save Saranda Campaign (2011-2013) are examples of how women link environmental preservation with community survival (Netarhat Field Firing Range Protest, 2005; Save Saranda Campaign, 2013).

### **Adivasi Women: Sociocultural and Political Context**

The role of Adivasi women of Jharkhand becomes difficult to understand without knowledge of their sociocultural context. The Adivasi community considers ecology as sacred as opposed to Western ideology which considers them resources for exploitation. Women of Jharkhand take part in Sarna worship, Karam festivals and the Sohrai harvest celebration where rituals affirm cultural identity and reinforce ecological ethics. Women leaders like Dayamani Barla have drawn on both indigenous cosmology and democratic rights to fight against land grabs. However, the leadership of women is often understated, treating their participation as subordinate rather than central-a gap this paper aims to correct.

### **Environmental Justice and Postcolonial Theory**

Postcolonial Ecocriticism provides valuable tools to understand the environmental struggles of Jharkhand. Rob Nixon points out that environmental harm is a slow but gradual process often invisible to mainstream audiences (Nixon, 2011). The resource extraction in Global South, says Huggan and Tiffin, is embedded in colonial legacy, visible in the exploitation of Jharkhand (Huggan & Tiffin, 2010). These reveal how Adivasi women face a double burden of gendered labor and ecological vulnerability. It also suggests that resistance movements are not merely political but rather they are acts of cultural preservation.

Despite extensive scholarship on ecofeminism, Indigenous environmental resistance and postcolonial ecocriticism, the specific role of Adivasi women in expressing ecological resistance, especially in the context of Jharkhand, remains underexplored. Existing studies focus on displacement, development conflicts and tribal movements, often ignoring the gendered ecological knowledge and cultural practices through which women sustain resistance. Representation gaps also exist within institutional and media narratives, where male leadership is often documented while women's resistance remain hidden. This study addresses this gap by examining how Adivasi women combine ecological knowledge, ritual practices and collective political action in their defense of Jal-Jungle-Jameen.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This study examines Adivasi women's resistance in Jharkhand through the lens of Jal-Jungle-Jameen, each inseparable from their struggle against ecological dispossession. In regions such as Koel and Karo, Saranda and Netarhat, these elements are closely tied to subsistence practices such as agriculture, forest-based livelihoods and access to water. Women's engagement in resistance movements can therefore be understood in relation to their roles in sustaining these everyday material practices.

The analysis employs an ecofeminist perspective to explore how women's participation in environmental struggles emerges from their responsibilities within resource management and community life. Rather than assuming an essential closeness between women and nature, this approach emphasizes how their involvement in agriculture, seed preservation and forest use informs and shapes their participation in movements such as those in Koel and Karo, Netarhat and Saranda.

The approach also uses postcolonial political ecology to set-up these struggles within a longer historical trajectory of land and resource governance. Historical resistance, including movements led by Bhagwan Birsa Munda against colonial land control and subsequent legal interventions including the Chota Nagpur Tenancy Act (1908), are crucial for understanding present-day conflicts. More recent developments such as resistance to proposed tenancy law amendments and practices like Pathalgadi, where stone slabs are placed to assert local governance and land rights, reflect ongoing assertions of autonomy and rights over land and local governance.

Across the cases under consideration, resistance takes the form of organized collective action including protests, village assemblies, and community-led initiatives aimed at safeguarding access to Jal-Jungle-Jameen. Within this coordination, Adivasi women play significant roles in coordination, maintaining social networks and sustaining livelihood practices connected to resource use. Their participation is thus conceptualized as integral to broader collective responses to land acquisition, mining expansion and state-driven interventions in forested regions.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The research adopts a qualitative, interpretive research design based on secondary sources, including documented case studies, archival materials, activist reports and scholarly literature. The focus is not on numerical measurement of ecological change but on the lived experiences, seeking to interpret representations of Adivasi women's resistance to ecological degradation as documented in narratives, reports and archival sources. An exploratory design is preferred to uncover symbolism and lived experiences embedded in themes of Jal-Jungle-Jameen. By focusing on narratives and cultural memory, this study treats resistance not only as a political act but also an expression of ecological knowledge and identity.

### **Method of Analysis**

The study uses both contextual reading and thematic interpretive analysis of selected case studies. Oral traditions, ritual practices, protest narratives and historical accounts are treated as cultural data sources which encode Indigenous ecological knowledge. The qualitative scope of the research is limited, primarily to the Adivasi women in Jharkhand, mainly in districts of Saranda, Latehar, Gumla and Sahibganj, selected due to their sustained histories of ecological conflict and women-led resistance movements. The research, instead of attempting a quantitative ecological survey, emphasizes the qualitative cultural dimensions of environmental resistance, emphasizing narrative evidence, symbolic practices and collective memory. The study employs qualitative thematic analysis to interpret the selected materials.

The collective materials were analyzed using a thematic interpretive approach. Texts, reports and narratives were re-read to identify recurring patterns related to women's ecological roles, protest strategies and cultural practices. These patterns were coded and grouped into broader themes such as sacred ecology, ritualized protest, cultural memory and everyday ecological resistance. This process enabled the study to interpret how Adivasi women express ecological resistance through both political action and cultural expressions.

The thematic analysis made use of a multi-stage coding process:

- **Open Coding:** In the first stage, all selected texts, reports and narratives were closely read to identify recurring ideas and patterns related to ecological practices, resistance strategies and cultural expressions.
- **Axial Coding:** In the second stage, these codes were organized into broader conceptual categories such as sacred ecology, ritualized protest, cultural memory and everyday resistance.
- **Selective Coding:** In the final stage, these categories were refined into core analytical themes that guided the interpretation of the study.

### **Sources of Data**

- The data corpus consists of documented case studies of Koel-Karo Movement (Indian Social Institute, 2000), Save Saranda Campaign (Save Saranda Campaign, 2013) and the Netarhat Field Firing Range protests (Netarhat Field Firing Range Protest, 2005) drawn from NGO reports, archival news sources, activist documentation and published academic studies. These cases were selected because of their sustained female participation and ecological significance.
- **Cultural and Oral Traditions:** Songs, Rituals and festivals (Sarna worship, Karam, Sohrai) that are treated as cultural texts and act as repositories of ecological knowledge.
- **Academic Literature:** *Ecofeminism* (Agarwal, 1992; Mies & Shiva, 1988), *Indigenous Environmental Resistance* (Fernandez, 2008; Prasad, 2016) and *Postcolonial Ecocriticism* (Huggan & Tiffin, 2010; Nixon, 2011).

These case studies were selected because they represent historically significant environmental conflicts in Jharkhand with sustained participation of Adivasi women. They also reflect diverse ecological contexts, including river-based resistance, forest-based conservation struggles and tribal land rights movements, enabling a comprehensive analysis of women's ecological agency across diverse ecological contexts.

### **JHARKHAND'S ECOLOGICAL AND CULTURAL LANDSCAPE**

Jharkhand is often described as a "land of forests" and gets its designation from the dense green cover as well as its rich tribal cultural identity. There is the presence of contested terrains, where rich cultural and ecological wealth is at loggerheads with extractive industries. This chapter maps the ecological zones, cultural geographies and industrial frontiers of Jharkhand which help understand the pressures shaping Adivasi resistance.

#### **Ecological Zones Under Pressure**

- Jharkhand has six major forest divisions-Saranda, Palamu Tiger Reserves, Dalma, Rajmahal hills, Porhat and Hazaribagh- each facing different ecological pressures.
- Saranda forest in West Singhbhum- home to Asia's largest Sal Forest, has faced extensive iron ore extraction. Elephant corridors have faced destruction at the hands of mining expansion which not only affected these animals, but the Ho and Munda community too were displaced.
- The Dalma Wildlife Sanctuary, despite being a protected area, has seen road projects and mining license leases in its periphery leading to fragmentation of habitat. Due to habitat destruction, it is quite common that elephants stray into farmlands damaging the crops and huts of the farmers.

- The Rajmahal hills of Sahibganj, earlier known for its geology, have been reduced to a site for stone quarrying. Dust, pollution and cutting of hills threaten both biodiversity and landscape which are a revered part of the Santhal cosmology.

### **River Basin and Water Conflicts**

The rivers of Jharkhand, namely Damodar, Subarnarekha, Koel and Barakar are lifelines for agriculture and its rich cultural heritage, yet the Damodar basin suffers from industrial effluents which reduce fish diversity and contaminates drinking water. Also, the Koel and Karo rivers, which form an important source for Adivasi agriculture, have repeatedly been targeted for hydroelectric projects. Protests were demonstrated where women adopted not logistical but symbolic routes-blocking survey teams, guarding sacred sites and maintaining community kitchens.

### **Cultural Geography and Sacred Landscapes Under Threat**

Sacred groves, ancestral hills and festival grounds are more than cultural markers-they are ecological reserves which portray the closeness of the tribes to nature. In the Gumla district of Jharkhand, road widening led to cutting down groves which were used for Karam rituals. Adivasi women came together to form a human chain, with a singular aim to protect their sacred groves. In West Singhbhum, in the villages displaced by mining, Sohrai Mural traditions have faded - an erosion of not only culture but also of ecological knowledge.

### **Industrial Expansion and Displacement Patterns**

Jharkhand's industrial belt heavily overlaps Adivasi territories and as reflected in government data that over 40% of the state mining leases are in scheduled areas where there are high instances of displacement. As a result, the Adivasi villages in Dhanbad, were forced to relocate due to an expansion of open-cast mines. The uranium mines at Jaduguda of East Singhbhum have linked radiation exposure to health crises. Thus, it is the Adivasi women who bear the burden of this radiation, with high rates of miscarriage and congenital illness. Besides, stone extraction in Rajmahal hills of Sahibganj has led to landslides and loss of medicinal plants.

### **Conflict Hotspots and Historical Continuity of Resistance**

Most of Jharkhand's present ecological struggles are traditionally linked to earlier struggles. The Koel- Karo movement opposed the building of two hydroelectric dams that could have submerged hundred and thirty-five villages. The participation of women ensured the resistance continued for more than two decades. Women leaders like Phulo and Jhano, though remembered for their role in freedom struggle, their acts of defense of land and community sovereignty is important symbolically, connecting anti colonial struggle to anti corporate resistance.

This indicates that the pressure on Adivasi women is compounded by their gender roles- it is systematic, intersecting ecology, economy and culture. When a river is polluted or forests cleared, the first impact is faced by women positioning them as primary actors in ecological defense.

### **ANALYSIS**

The analysis of the resistance of Adivasi women in Jharkhand indicates that they are not as isolated protests, but as a mixture of ecological imagination-borrowing from ancestral cosmologies and urgent political realities. The analysis is an insight into the struggles of how women transform cultural memory into ecological resistance. Case studies like the Koel-Karo, Saranda, Netarhat and forest defense movements illustrate how Adivasi women enact ecofeminist practices.

### **The Koel-Karo Movement: Rivers as Ancestors**

The Koel-Karo hydroelectric project proposed in 1973 in present-day Jharkhand, aimed to generate 710 MW of electricity through construction of dams on the south Koel and North Karo rivers (Indian Social Institute, 2000). The project was expected to affect more than 100 villages and displace thousands of Adivasi families, involving the submergence of agricultural land, forest areas and sites associated with river-based rituals. On 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2001, police opened fire on a gathering of 5000 Adivasi protesters at Tapkara, resulting in the death of at least 8 people and injuries to several others (Shrivastava, 2022).

Opposition to the project developed through organized village-level mass movements led by groups such as the Koel-Karo Jan Sangathan, Adivasi women participated in protest gatherings, restricted the entry of survey teams and upheld collective decisions against land acquisition. This however complicates conventional ecofeminist reading as women are not simply defending nature as a nurturing mother but as spiritual kin. This also unsettles the anthropocentric ideology which treats the river system as resources. Here, the protest of Adivasi women foreshadows a global push to grant rivers a legal personhood as in New Zealand and Uttarakhand.

This indicates that ecological resistance is embedded in cultural and epistemic constructs rather than being merely reactive.

### **Saranda and the Iron of Resistance**

Saranda forest in West Singhbhum, Jharkhand, spans about 820 sq. km and includes around 50 revenue villages and 10 forest villages, with an estimated population of 75,000 people dependent on forest resources. The region contains major iron ore deposits with mining operations in Noamundi, Kiriburu and Gua, contributing to forest degradation and mineral extraction (Save Saranda Campaign, 2013).

Recent proposals to declare large parts of Saranda as a wildlife sanctuary have triggered resistance from affected communities. On 16 November 2025, residents from multiple villages organized a full day blockade against this proposal. Protesters also invoked Article 244(A) and the Fifth schedule asserting their rights over land and forest governance (Yugantar Bharati, n.d.)

In these movements, Adivasi women participated in protests, village meetings and collective decision making. Women's struggles take on a double role resisting corporate mining and militarization. The women of Ho villages are testament to how extensive mining has not only destroyed Sal forests but also made water undrinkable. Thus, the resistance is not only a claim to environmental justice but also a critique of extractive ideologies that frame land as a resource. This makes women of the forest both a site of ecological loss and resilience (Press Trust of India, 2025). This reflects how Adivasi women function as producers of ecological knowledge rather than being passive participants.

### **Netarhat Field Firing Range: Land, Militarization and Resistance**

The Netarhat Field Firing Range project, notified through the Bihar Gazette orders in 1991-1992, aimed to acquire land across 245 villages in the Palamu and Gumla regions, affecting an estimated 2.4 lakh people (Netarhat Field Firing Range Protest, 2005). The area had been earlier brought under military use through the 1956 Manoeuvres Field Firing and Artillery Practice Act, with firing practices continuing until the early 1990s. The proposed range involved periodic military exercises that would require temporary evacuation of villages, raising concerns regarding disruption and displacement of agricultural and forest-based livelihoods. Jan Sangharsh Samiti, formed in 1993 led large scale agitation when more than 50,000 people gathered at Tutwapani- Jokipokhar (Banerjee, 2022).

Opposition to the firing range took place in the form of mass rallies, road blockades and satyagraha actions, with Adivasi women leading from the front, forming human barricades to prevent military entry. In several villages resistance also referred to the protection of practices associated with land, including festivals such as Karam and Sarhul.

Women's participation extended to the transfer of knowledge related to seasonal cycles, seeds and cultivation practices through community gatherings during protests.

### **Everyday Resistance: Fire Water and Field**

In daily life the resistance of women takes the form of small acts such as collecting wood to light fire or refusing to sell lands to middlemen forming a part of a micro-resistance. These resistances are neither violent nor spectacular but are of huge significance. When women insist on sustainable gathering, they actively resist state laws and at the same time preserve the regenerative capacity of land.

Such practices challenge dominant development narratives by focusing on relational and non-extractive modes of existence.

### **Historical Resonance: Phulo and Jhano**

Phulo and Jhano were Santhal women who participated in the Santhal Rebellion of 1855 against colonial authorities and exploitative land policies of the region. The rebellion emerged in response to land dispossession, revenue extraction and interference in traditional systems of land use, affecting Santhal communities across present-day Jharkhand and adjoining areas. Within this context, Phulo and Jhano are recorded as having taken part in armed resistance (Krishnamurty, 2016).

Their participation reflects the involvement of women in struggles linked to land protection and community autonomy during the rebellion. The actions associated with Phulo and Jhano indicate that resistance to external control over land included direct participation in confrontations, with women taking part in defending territorial and livelihood-based practices (Chacko, 2014).

A pattern emerges in these case studies: Adivasi women appear not merely as abstract victims of development but as active agents shaping ecological future. Their acts of singing songs of the forest, teaching by protest, sprinkling water at protest sites and invoking ancient warriors is an active demonstration of resistance which is simultaneously cultural and ecological. This questions the status quo which limits Adivasi women in the realm of labor or symbolic protest. In contrast, Adivasi women emerge as knowledge producers whose practices reflect an implicit ecological philosophy rooted in kinship. For ecofeminism, rather than seeing them as a confirmation of global theses, it is seen as women producing a context-specific form of ecofeminist practice rooted in Jharkhand which questions the global debate on ecology and gender roles.

## **DISCUSSION**

Across Koel-Karo, Saranda and Netarhat, Adivasi women's environmental activism operates at the intersection of ecological survival and political resistance rather than as a conceptual link between gender and nature. The findings show that ecofeminist assumptions of a universal woman-nature relationship are insufficient in explaining these movements which are instead based on historically produced ecological labor, spiritual geography and collective resource dependence (Agarwal, 1992; Mies & Shiva, 1993).

Across these sites, the ecological conflict is consistently tied to material disruptions in forest-based livelihoods. In Saranda, for instance, forest clearance linked to mining activities alters access to fuelwood, forest produce and water sources, directly affecting everyday survival practices

(Yugantar Bharati, n.d.). Similarly, in Koel and Karo, river related displacement transforms water access into a site of political contestation, where ecological change is inseparable from governance and land alienation. Netarhat further demonstrates how plateau ecologies are reconfigured through developmental extraction projects, producing layered forms of dispossession. In all three cases, environmental degradation is not limited to individuals but experienced as a social process of disruption (Banerjee, 2022).

Within this context, women's participation emerges from their position in ecological labor systems rather than from their proximity to nature. Their roles in water collection, forest gathering and subsistence maintenance produce an ecological consciousness that is both practical and political. The study shows that this consciousness translates into forms of resistance that combine everyday survival practices and collective efforts by all women of the region. Ritual practices such as Sarna worship, forest-based festivals and song traditions function as methods of territorial assertion in threatened landscapes.

The study also situates contemporary struggles within longer histories of dispossession where current forms of environmental degradation reproduce colonial patterns of resource extraction. The invocation of historical figures such as Bhagwan Birsa Munda and women leaders like Phulo and Jhano illustrates how a collective memory is organized to construct continuity between anti-colonial resistance and present-day environmental struggle (Chacko, 2014).

Thus, these cases demonstrate that Adivasi women's environmental activism cannot be sufficiently represented through universal ecofeminist categories. Instead, it requires a hybrid analytical model which combines Indigenous environmental knowledge, situated gendered labor and a postcolonial critique of governance. Environmental resistance in these contexts emerges not just as an ecological concern but also as a struggle over political recognition, territorial sovereignty and historical justice.

## **LIMITATIONS**

This study is based primarily on secondary sources and documented case studies rather than primary fieldwork. While these materials provide valuable insights into their ecological resistance, they may not fully capture the diversity of lived experiences of Adivasi women across different communities in Jharkhand. Additionally, the study is limited to selected regions and movements, which may not represent all forms of indigenous ecological resistance. Future research using field-based methods such as interviews and ethnographic observation could deepen understanding of these dynamics.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study aimed to highlight the struggles of Adivasi women in Jharkhand and define their resistance as important to both the survival of culture and environmental justice. The narrative implies that Jal-Jungle-Jameen are not only resources for exploitation, but rather living entities mixed with their rituals and identity. For the Adivasi women, ecological degradation and culture go hand in hand, hence their activism cannot be reduced to mere environmentalism- rather it is a defense of life. The findings indicate that ecofeminist notions of a woman's closeness to nature are not enough to define and discuss resistance- historically and materially grounded. Rather, these women's ecological consciousness comes from historically situated roles in agriculture, water collection and rituals- which is damaged by displacement and pollution. The ecological harm borne by Jharkhand due to its mining activities can be effectively described as slow violence as defined by Rob Nixon, thus pointing out why resistance is not only a sacred duty but also a political necessity (Nixon, 2011). The contextual mapping reveals the ecological battlefields as sites of

cultural contest where Adivasi women make use of hybrid strategies embedding protests and rituals. Such strategies are an exposition of the limitations of policy driven conservation practices which exclude indigenous participation and underplay women's active participation. Thus, the analysis suggests that the struggles of Adivasi women in Jharkhand are not a singular movement but historically rooted in anti-colonial uprising. The analysis demonstrates that the defense of ecology cannot be separated from the protection of what we call community identity and history. Recognizing their role is not only accepting an overlooked dimension of resistance but also broadening the lens of ecofeminism and environmental humanities (Mies & Shiva, 1993). In doing so, the study confirms that the future of ecological justice must be imagined with indigenous women.

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