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## Table of Contents

<b>Joy Nwiyi &amp; Monica Udoette</b>	<b>BETWEEN WORLDS: NARRATING GLOBALISATION, IDENTITY AND ALIENATION IN LEILA ABOULELA'S SHORT STORIES</b>	----- <b>7</b>
<b>Mervat Mahmoud Ahmed</b>	<b>Conceptual Metaphors in Climate Change Discourse in the Speeches of African Vs. European Political Leaders: A Cognitive Approach</b>	----- <b>17</b>
<b>Samar M. Maatouq</b>	The Interrelation between the Threatening Violence of Dams Construction and the Atrocities of Indigenous Women and Nature: an Ecofeminist Reading of American Indian and Nubian Literature	----- <b>31</b>

## **The Interrelation between the Threatening Violence of Dams Construction and the Atrocities of Indigenous Women and Nature: an Ecofeminist Reading of American Indian and Nubian Literature**

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*“A people is not defeated until the hearts of its woman are on the ground”*

– Cheyenne proverb

### **Abstract**

American Indians and Nubians are entirely different cultures with different backgrounds both spatially and timely. Yet, these two indigenous cultures, that apparently had no contact with each other, experienced similar conditions of exile as a result of building dams in their homelands. Both American Indians and Nubians suffered from forced migrations which are extremely related to water. As a result their lives experienced an ultimate and deep anthropological change. Though numerous studies have been conducted on these two cultures' literature, little attention has been paid to comparing the similarities and differences between them. This article aims at explaining how American Indians and Nubians react towards their environment and the atrocities they experienced. In addition, it intends to explore the subject matter of building dams as an aggression to nature and natural elements, especially water, as well as being the reason for many injustices faced by American Indians and Nubians in general and their women in particular.

**Keywords:** American Indians, Nubians, water, migrations, Ecofeminism.

### **Introduction**

Since the dawn of history, water has always run gracefully and freely. Most ancient civilizations worshipped water and praised it in both love and fear. People respected the life of the rivers as well as that of their inhabitants for thousands of years. Nevertheless, during the course of time people became detached from their connection to the rivers and started to manipulate, abuse, and interfere with them. The worst taming of water ever has been the building of dams under the pretext of the supposed development. Vandana Shiva in her book *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Survival in India* comments on this water management and the "destruction (that) is taking place in the name of 'development' and progress," that "there must be something seriously wrong with a concept of progress that threatens survival itself" (xiv).

This article investigates two literally works of two indigenous cultures: Linda Hogan's *Solar Storms* (1995) representing American Indian literature, and Haggag Oddoul's *Nights of Musk: Stories from Old Nubia* (trans. 2005) representing Nubian one. Linda Hogan (1947- ) is an internationally recognized Chickasaw public speaker and writer of poetry, fiction, and

essays. She is a winner of many prestigious awards. Her lyrical work contains Native spirituality and indigenous systems in all genres and is considered a work of literary activism. She writes of environmental justice and its effect on her American Indian people. The second writer is Haggag Hassan Oddoul (1944- ) a Nubian playwright and fiction writer who handles the concept of the tragedy of the loss of Nubia as a result of the construction of the Aswan High Dam. Though he was young of age, he witnessed the trauma of the Nubian displacement and resettlement. Through his characters' pain and suffering, he tells the story of his lost lands. His *Nights of Musk* was awarded the State Prize for Short Stories in 1990. These two literary works represent diverse environmental injustices and damage that resulted in the forced displacement of the American Indian and Nubian communities. This discussion of environmental justice brings forth the notions of not only nature, but also those of race, gender, and class. In addition, it broadens the readers' perspectives to include humans, animals, land, and water as intertwined elements of nature which form a bond.

Furthermore, this article handles the relationship between women and nature as well as the injustices they both have suffered from within what Karen Warren in her article "Ecological Feminist Philosophies: An Overview of the Issues" calls: "oppressive and patriarchal conceptual frameworks" (xii). In her other essay "Feminist Environmental Philosophy" Warren defines ecofeminism as "an umbrella term for a variety of different philosophical perspectives on interconnections among women of diverse races/ethnicities, socioeconomic statuses, and geographic locations, on the one hand, and nonhuman animals and nature, on the other" (1). Greta Gaard, one of the most celebrated ecofeminists, states that ecofeminism's basic premise is that the same ideology which sanctions oppression based on race, gender, species, etc, is the same ideology which allows the oppression of nature. That's why, according to her, "ecofeminism calls for an end to all oppressions, arguing that no attempt to liberate women (or any other oppressed group) will be successful without an equal attempt to liberate nature" (1).

### **The Relationship Between Indigenous People, Women, and Water**

In his article "The Terrestrial and Aquatic Intelligence of Linda Hogan," Donelle N. Dreese stresses: "Water (is) a recurring image for physical and psychological healing in a contemporary world of sexism, drought, violence, and hunger" (8). The researcher's analysis of oppression and exploitation focuses not only on the mutual oppression of women and elements of nature (here water) but on how one oppressive system is interrelated with all forms of oppression as well, whether these forms are based on gender (women), natural elements (water), race (American Indians), or on ethnicity and cultural minority (Nubians).

To support the notion of the interrelatedness of oppressive systems, the idea that all of the oppressed elements are not treated as such because they are related to each other or because they share some features, but because they all are treated as "the other." In this analysis, women and water suffer from oppressive systems not only because they are related in mutual suffering, but because they are a representation of "the other" as well. Zuleyma Tang Halpin, in "Scientific Objectivity and the Concept of 'The Other'," argues:

Women have been oppressed, not so much because they have been equated to nature, but rather because both women and nature have been equated to "the Other" [and also that] ... the same dynamic that has resulted in labeling women as inferior and justified society's domination of women and nature, has done the same during most of our history, to Blacks and other people of color, and the poor. (qtd. in O'Loughlin 148)

Having stressed this point of *otherness* and its relation to oppression, a study of the relationship between American Indians and Nubians, especially women, and water, as well as the water image and the role water plays in the cycle of life for them, is of necessity.

### **The Role of Water**

John K. Donaldson gives us some of the "ascribed attributes" of water that can be applicable to how indigenous people feel for water. According to his article "As Long as the Waters Shall Run: The "Obstructed Water" Metaphor in American Indian Fiction," water is a "universal element; mediator between earth and air; ongoing and discernable cyclic process; origin and sustainer of life; (and a) cleansing agent" (73). Water is sacred and always metaphorically linked to cleansing and healing powers. American Indian and Nubian cultures are best described as riparian, and that is why values and beliefs about water according to American Indians and Nubians are examined.

In Linda Hogan's *Solar Storms*, "water becomes a recurring image for physical and psychological healing" (Dreese 2002, 17). This is so much true for Angel, to whom water represents healing the deep psychological wounds inside of her (mainly fear and anger) that resulted from the gaps in her blank memory and from the physical wounds and scars in her face that Hannah, her disturbed mother, has caused.

From the very first paragraph in the opening chapter of *Solar Storms*, the image of water is present, water is the first thing Angel sees when she returns to Adam's Rib, it is described as "the place where water was broken apart by land, land split open by water so that the maps showed places both bound and, if you know the way in, boundless. The elders said it was where land and water had joined together in an ancient pact, now broken" (S.S. 21). Angel describes her return to her female ancestors as "water going back to itself. I was water falling into a lake and these women were that lake" (S.S. 55). Angel herself realizes that she has a gift with water that she knows no one has, she can see inside water, she states: "I was the only one I knew of who could see inside water. No one else could do this, not even Bush. She approved of my gift. She said I could see to the bottom of things" (85-86).

Angel narrates how Agnes (resembling every woman) gains back her power when acquainted with water, even by the mere sitting silently by the river. "Agnes walked to the place where the Perdition River flowed into Lake Grand. She went alone, to think, she said, and to be silent. Always she returned, refreshed and clear eyed, as if the place where two waters met was a juncture where fatigue yielded to comfort, where a woman renewed herself" (S.S. 44).

Speaking of renewal through water, Angel herself experiences a strong moment of sudden revelation and self-enlightenment through water in the shape of rain. She describes a rain fall which "had the force of a sea behind it" (78):

With the window wide open, I lived inside water. There was no separation between us. I knew in a moment what water was. It was what had been snow. It had passed through old forests, now gone. It was the sweetness of milk and corn and it journeyed through human lives. It was blood spilled on the ground. Some of it was the blood of my ancestors. (78)

Angel is made anew by the falling rain, as if she is baptized, not in the Christian meaning, but in the earth-based one. The water with its healing and cleansing powers relieved her from her pains, and for the first time, she sleeps well, without having to take the sleeping potion that Dora-Rouge made for her. She narrates: "When I slept it was deeply, finally" (78). Dreese in *Ecocriticism: Creating Self and Place in Environmental and American Indian Literatures*

states that "much of the time the water imagery signifies birth, hope, cleansing, unpolluted earth, and healing" (37).

Then Hogan, through Angel, states an aspect of American Indian respect for the powers of water and their consideration of it as a deity, by setting the example of the "Hungry Mouth of Water". In *Ecocriticism*, Dreese argues that American Indians treat the environment "as nothing less than kin and often as the embodiments of Gods or figures of great wisdom" (7). Angel describes Hungry Mouth of Water as: "A circle in the lake where winter ice never froze.... Young people, with their new and shiny beliefs, called this place the Warm Spot... But the older ones, whose gods still lived on earth, called it the Hungry Mouth of Water, because if water wasn't a spirit, if water wasn't a god that ruled their lives, nothing was" (62).

As a gesture of respecting the powers of water and to "keep the Hungry Mouth of Water content while we (Angel and Husk) passed it, Husk took a bag of tobacco from his pocket and fed it to the water, then he added cornmeal and bread" (63). Husk respects the mystical –and majestic at the same time– spirit of water and he offers it food and tobacco in order to grant them a safe pass through it. He is representing American Indians beliefs that what "is taken is returned through prayer, ritual, and ceremony to maintain the delicate balance upon which all life rests" (Dreese 2002, 7). Then, Angel comes to the realization "The lake was alive. I was sure of it. Not only when it was large-hipped and moving, but even when it was white, contracted, and solid. The Perdicion River flowing beneath moving ice was alive. So was the ice itself" (129). This is the essence of Ecofeminism, that life is an interconnected web, that natural elements are not lifeless entities, and that women are smart enough, quite enough to feel the living nature and hear its speaking voices.

There is even a deal that is made between Dora-Rouge and the water of the angry rivers; the Big Arm River having been diverted into the Se Nay. Interfering with the natural running course of the rivers, because of the building of dams, resulted in the change in the nature of the previously-peaceful rivers. "'It's angry" said Dora-Rouge.... "The rivers are angry. Both of them"' (192). Longo and Miewald state that any "attempt to control nature (water)...was anathema.... Water in particular was an integral part of the shrine and should not be changed" (55).

Being the only way to go, and angry as the rivers were, Dora-Rouge had to work out a deal with the rivers to grant them a safe pass. Angel narrates:

It was for all these things that Dora-Rouge was going to talk to the churning river, the white and muddy foam of it, the hydrogen and oxygen of it, and convince it to let us pass safely. All this she did while we watched.... Dora-Rouge sat on the bank of the river and spoke. We could only see her lips move. We heard nothing she said. But after a while she nodded at us. "It will let us go," she said loudly....Dora-Rouge said a prayer, opened her hand, and tossed tobacco into it (the river). Her eyes were closed, a high-pitched song coming from deep inside her." (193-194)

After a fierce journey in the angry waters, "something godly brought (them) through. May be it was the words of Dora-Rouge, after all, that saved (them)" (195).

This deal that Dora-Rouge has struck is a crystal-clear evidence of the connection that exists between American Indians and natural elements, especially has water. Dora-Rouge has communicated with the river, spoken with it, and the river answered back in the same language that only they understood. This kind of a connection is what we lost in the midst of the supposed-improvement of patriarchy. We are the ones who are truly ignorant. We are surfeited in information, but, ironically, we are starving for knowledge, the kind of wisdom that the earth-based cultures have had for long centuries to go.

When we turn to the Nubian literature, we will find out that water is, too, a recurring image. Water is a crucial part of the lives and rituals of all Nubians. They have developed a deep love for the river Nile, "Our Nile is sweet and kind.... Our river is sweet.... The river of goodness" (*Nights of Musk* 25, 97). Nile represents life for Nubians. Every beautiful thing is compared to the Nile, even describing the beloved is related to the Nile; a man describes his love saying: "Sweat ran down her face and neck like branches of the Nile" (*NOM* 30). The playground of children has been the river and its bank. "We drew pure air into our chests and counted the colors of the magic Nile.... Naked we dove in and found it clear and pure. Wonderful Nile, mighty as the sea" (*NOM* 31-32). Women usually drop candy bars, sugar, perfume, and even food in the river to please it as well as its inhabitants, whether the amon nutto, the River People, or amon dugur, the River Trolls<sup>1</sup>. Nubians cherish the Nile, "the sacred Nile" they call it. Being sacred as it is, it is, and always has been, the main element in all Nubian life-circle rituals.

As for the relationship between the Nubians and the creatures that they believe to inhabit the River Nile, Fadwa al-Guindi in her article "The Angels in The Nile: A Theme in Nubian Ritual," refers to "a community of supernatural beings existing in the river Nile and associated with goodness and benevolence only. These beings were called *malayket-al-bahr* (river angels)" (105). John G. Kennedy, the editor of *Nubian Ceremonial Life* (2005), comments on this point saying: "It is among Nubian women that beliefs in (the river angels, or The River People) are most clearly conceived and strongly held" (104). These river people are both males and females, and the female ones are said to outnumber the male ones "because the river "favored females"" (105). The Nubians are unified with the natural elements around them especially water and its River People. In *Nights of Musk*, a wedding is described as "draw(ing) the whole village. Even the River People, inhabitants of the cool depth emerge dripping from the water alone and in groups. We can feel them down on the bank of the river sitting in the branches and among the palm fronds.... We call to them. "Welcome amon nutto, welcome People of the River"" (35-36).

In her article, al-Guindi also cites how the rituals concerning the life-cycle of the Nubians are deeply related to the Nile, whether these rituals are performed during incidents of birth, mirage, or death. She explains that the rituals concerning the delivery of a baby begin even before the delivery itself and during pregnancy. She tells us of a woman who "made a dish of *asida* (bread cooked in milk) and took it to the river where she threw it to the river creatures so that they would ensure her an easy and successful delivery" (110). After the birth of the child, the mother carries "a knife" and walks to the river followed by the midwife who carries "the sand on which the blood of delivery had dropped, seven dates, and the afterbirth" (111). And on reaching the river, the woman throws all these things inside it. For the *sebu'* celebration, "seven dishes of food... seven drops of perfume, seven drops of henna, and seven drops of kohl" (111) are thrown into the river. After that, these seven dishes are filled with river water in order to be "taken back to the house and sprayed all over the room where the child slept" (111), so that the River People would bless the baby.

The second ritual of the cycle of life is related to marriage. In the night of the wedding and before going to the wedding party, the groom goes to the river and bathes in it in order to "ensure the groom's ability to procreate children, since fertility was one of the attributes most persistently associated with the river and its creatures" (110). And early on the first morning of their married life the bride and the groom bathe together in the Nile and drink from its

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<sup>1</sup>According to the Nubians, Amon nutto, the River People, are the good inhabitants of the river bottom, and amon dugur, the River Trolls, are the evil ones.

blessed water. Oddoul describes this scene in his *Nights of Musk*; a scene of water running in their bodies and souls:

In the darkness before dawn, we jumped into the celestial Nile to perform our ablutions in its pure and holy water. It flows from the springs of Salsabeel in Paradise. The rippling water has its effect. It passes over our bodies and we absorb its silt and fertile mud.... The water of life.... It embraces your sweet body slowly and deliberately and seeps inside it until it rests in the womb. (40)

The third and final life-cycle ritual is that of death. al-Guindi explains that the death ritual that is related to the river take place on two different days; first

at noon the day of the death and once again on *kobar* day, the day on which women visit the cemetery after a death.... On both days women purposely (go) to the river together and wash their faces. This was said to "cool the body of the deceased." After washing they sat for a few minutes by the river, leaving their faces wet. This allow(s) the corpse to relax in its grave. (110)

### **Dams as Violence to The River**

Vandana Shiva in her book *Staying Alive* provides a profound analysis of the multiple forms of violence done to the rivers as a result of damming their natural course. She argues that the dams are built by patriarchal engineers, experts and technocrats with masculinist minds, who treat water as a passive, linear, and static entity. They never participated in an integrated water cycle as natives, particularly women, did. "Projects of controlling the rivers, of damming and diverting them against their logic and flow to increase water availability and provide 'dependable' water supplies have proven to be self-defeating" (176).

There are many horrific effects of damming and diverting rivers from their natural course: first, missing the point of the cyclical nature of water and that its diversion results in the depletion and drying of groundwater sources and wells, as the river is prevented from recharging them. Second, damming rivers and reusing their waters several times before their disposal into the sea conducts the problems of water-logging and salinity, which cause the third bad side effect, that the reduced inflows of fresh water into the sea, and the notion that the running fresh water into the sea is 'wasted', leads to disturbing the balance between the fresh water and sea water, which by its turn results in the increase of salinity levels, sea erosion, and the marine life (174, 175, 176, 177).

All of these injustices, and many more, are characteristics of projects that work against, rather than with, what Shiva calls "the logic of the river" (177). The irony is that building dams was intended to increase water availability and stability; however, water crisis and scarcity resulted. Indigenous peoples, women particularly, who are deeply related to the rivers and water, resisted the damming of what they hold as sacred rivers, and fought against their dislocation and against the profanation and destruction of their sacred sites. However, their struggle is not only for their immediate purposes, but they speak for the rights of the river itself, expressed in Linda Hogan's words: "No one had asked the water what it wanted" (*S.S.* 279). Linda Vance in her article "Ecofeminism and the Politics of Reality," expresses this Ecofeminist endeavor of identification and empathy: "We... fight for the preservation and protection of wild rivers... because their wildness resonates so deeply with our own, because we know ourselves what a joy it is to follow one's own course" (136).

In Linda Hogan's *Solar Storms*, the violence that the water faced at the hands of the patriarchal western man, even before the building of dams, is highlighted from the beginning of the novel. Hogan tells us of a healing mineral water that was dynamited at the order of a bishop "who wanted to spite the superstitious natives who said, and even worse, believed,

that they'd been healed by those milky waters.... Bubbling waters that came from stone... the bishop maintained that any healing in that place must have come from the devil, who lived under the land" (66). By this act of hatred, rather than love, the American Indians further rejected the western notion of patriarchal Christianity; "Because of the killing of the waters, the Indians who journeyed there for healing let Christianity pass them by; they didn't want a god that made them sick and took away the remedy" (66).

Because of the diversion of the rivers from their natural running course, the waters were "muddy, earthmoving" (102), instead of the soft music of the running water, "the river was a deafening roar" (191), and as a result of forcing two rivers to be combined in one path, water "rushed down, overfull... The water of two rivers, forced into one, was deeper and wider than it should have been" (191-192). A personification of the two "fighting" rivers who "had probably never liked each other in the first place" (195), signifies the aliveness of rivers in the American Indian perspective. Water had to be turned "back to where water wanted and needed to be" (277-278). "Water... had its own needs, its own speaking and desires. No one had asked the water what it wanted" (279).

The angry water will eventually stand up for itself; hopefully, it will bring damage on water-obstructing dams. As Angel states:

And in time it would be angry land. It would try to put an end to the plans for dams and drowned rivers. An ice jam at the Riel River would break loose and rage over the ground, tearing out dams and bridges, the construction all broken by the blue, cold roaring of ice no one was able to control. Then would come a flood of unplanned proportions that would suddenly rise up as high as the steering wheels of their machines. The Indian people would be happy with the damage, with the fact that water would do what it wanted and in its own way. (S.S. 224)

A Biblical allusion to the diluvial story of Noah is given, representing the complete damage that came upon land and animals: "In this flood, there would be no animals escaping two by two, no one to reach out for those who wander gracefully and far on four legs, to take hold of the wading birds with their golden claws at the bottom of water, to carry to safety the yellow-eyed lynx, the swift dark marten" (355). However, this time, unlike Noah's ship, there are no survivors. Angel hopes that the angry water would flood everything and the destruction would be devastating and thorough, and would leave none of the oppressors alive. Through the acts of men, "the greedy, hungry water...claim(s) everything it once created" (338). Because of the actions of men, the life-giving water would turn into a life-taking unmerciful power that would take back everything it once gave life to. Unfortunately, to Angel and whoever was waiting for water to take its (and their own) revenge, water did not over-flood. It was trying to adapt to the new course, however not so successful. At the end of *Solar Storms*, the face of the earth is altered forever, and water is trying to cope with the change. "Now the river below us was trying to learn its new home, its new journey. It wasn't doing very well. Nor was the dry land that had been under water, now exposed to air, not yet with new grasses sprouting from it" (348).

"Seasons of the south, uninterrupted since the dawn of time, beware of the deluge. It will engulf you for an eternity in one final season ... the season of grief" (89). This is how Haggag Oddoul begins *The River People*, mentioning the indissoluble loss of the Nubians. Asha laments the status of the river and condemns the evil dam for obstructing the good river. She addresses the dam: "They dumped you into the way of the mighty river. You have blocked the life-flow of water. Behind you it has built up and drowned half our land. The river is good like its people, but the dam confined the water in a huge lake" (96).

Water is angry from this confinement. It used to run unobstructed into the valley of goodness; "The water swelled up like boiling milk" (96). However, instead of disemboguing its fury over the northerners who were violent to it and built the dam to obstruct it for their own benefit, water turns its anger on and submerges the land of those who loved it: "And as it rose it swallowed up half the green valley and destroyed it. It drowned lines of palm trees and polluted the sweet water. It ruined the time of peace and purity" (96).

Asha hopes for the river to stand up for itself and defend its right to be running freely, and get rid of the hideous dam. She demands: "Smash the dam to pieces. Flex your muscles in anger. Bring forth an invincible flood, not around the sides but headlong into the high wall. Smash it down into a thousand and one bricks. Carry away the remnants of its destruction and scatter them far and wide" (105-106). However, the river does not obey Asha's callings, and a final season of grief does engulf them with the death of both Asha and Siyam.

### **Women and Water: The Fellow-Sufferers**

One of the concepts of Ecofeminism is that hierarchy leads to patriarchy. That is why hierarchal social structures allow the domination of one group over the other, and result in what Warren calls the culture/nature, human/nature, man/woman polarizing dichotomies (xii), which sanction the human destruction of nature and oppression of women. Vandana Shiva in *Staying Alive* declares:

The devaluation and de-recognition of nature's work and productivity has led to the ecological crises; the devaluation and de-recognition of women's work has created sexism and inequality between men and women. The devaluation of subsistence, or rather sustenance economies, based on harmony between nature's work, women's work and man's work has created the various forms of ethnic and cultural crises that plague our world today. (42)

For indigenous women, subjugation is doubled. Lorelei Means states: "We are American Indian women, in that order. We are oppressed, first and foremost, as American Indians, as peoples colonized by the United States of America" (qtd. in Smith 22). While indigenous people suffer in general from being uprooted, forcibly migrated and reterritorialized into unsuitable conditions, women are the worst victims, as "separations from family members, homes, tribal regions, from their ways of life, their languages and identities are just a few of the various forms of human and cultural fractures" faced by women (Dreese 2002, 37).

One of the severest consequences of reterritorialization which harshly affected women is unemployment. Up until the time when patriarchal regimes decided to force "development" upon indigenous peoples, they were able to survive, no matter how harsh the environmental conditions get, they had always been able to get on terms with these conditions. However, when dislocation and appropriation occurred, indigenous people were often relocated in unproductive lands. So, indigenous men had to migrate again in order to make a living, leaving their women and children to loneliness and despair. Donelle Dreese, in *Ecocriticism*, states:

Families were torn apart because fathers had to move away to find work. The pressures to conform to the dominant economic system and to sacrifice their own way of life were daunting. By being forced to participate in the Western cultural economy, families were broken up and experienced new hardships they did not know how to confront (and from which they did not suffer before). In suffering literal physical removals, either onto reservations or to find work, the Native communities who were devoted to and intrinsically connected to place underwent widespread cultural disintegration. (93)

While their men are obliged to migrate to work and support their families, "women continue to be linked to life and nature through their role as providers to sustenance, food and water" (Shiva 41). This situation of the building of dams and the subsequent destruction of nature and dislocation of indigenous peoples resulted in what Shiva calls "feminisation of poverty" (11), which she explains as "the destruction of ecologically sound traditional technologies, often created and used by women, along with the destruction of their material base is generally believed to be responsible for the 'feminisation' of poverty in societies which have had to bear the costs of resource destruction" (10-11).

The image of the society of reservations/villages that consist only of women, children, and elders is a concurrent one that is found in American Indian and Nubian literature. In spite of their loneliness without their men, these women were, as Linda Hogan describes in *Solar Storms*, "mighty women" (29):

The first women at Adam's Rib had called themselves the Abandoned Ones.... The first generation of the Abandoned Ones travelled down with French fur trappers who were seeking their fortunes from the land. When the land was worn out, the beaver and wolf gone, mostly dead, the men moved on to what hadn't yet been destroyed, leaving their women and children behind, as if they too were used-up animals. (28)

In Adam's Rib "there were but a few men, and you could count them on the fingers of two hands" (28). However, *the mighty women*, though the poorest among the poor, would not give up. "The women eked out their living in whatever ways they could, fishing or sewing. They brought in their own wood, and with their homely, work-worn hands they patched their own houses to keep sleet, snow, and winds at bay. They were accustomed to hard work and they were familiar with loneliness" (S.S. 28). These women did not give up on themselves, and though they were struggling under the weight of life, they did not let go, and they tried their best to support their families, children, and elders.

Very similar to the hardships experienced by American Indian women, Nubian women have experienced unspeakable horrors of being alone without their husbands in barren, alien, and inhospitable surroundings. Nubian women remained in their "new" homes in the villages of Kom Ombo –where they were forced to migrate– to sustain the "old" way of life, customs and traditions, while their men are away to work and bring the supporting money. In some cases, most men either remarried and forgot about their wives-at-home, or left the country altogether and travelled abroad to seek a long-lost freedom.

After their displacement, Nubian women faced multiple hardships. Because of some of the social rules that forbid Nubian women from work, the impact of the feminization of poverty and subordination of women is present in the severest way. Haggag Oddoul in the two short stories of *Nights of Musk: Adila, Grandmother* and *The River People*, presents two female protagonists: Awada and Asha, respectively, who endured hard conditions in the resettlement reservation. The grandmother in *Adila, Grandmother* talked to her son in furious, sharp words because one of the family elders, "great-aunt Halima had gone to the Egyptians' market to sell eggs and some chickens she had reared. It was a terrible disgrace" (13). Then the grandmother burst into crying over their Old Nubia, lost to the building of the High Dam, accusing the northerners for their hunger and harsh life conditions, blaming them for the state of estrangement they are living in and for their loneliness as the result of the migration of their children.

Some of these children even married northern women and set for themselves new lives, leaving Nubian women alone in the villages, and the rate of unmarried Nubian women was remarkably high. In *The River People*, Asha curses and blames the High Dam for

separating her from Siyam, her lover, and feels ominous about being born in the same year of its building. "The dam has destroyed my life", says Asha, "I was born the year it was built, and what an evil omen that was. The dam drove Siyam from the village. It has filled me with deep sorrow and made me suffer great loss" (105). She addresses the dam: "Dam piled high, you are the same age as me. You split up lovers.... We could no longer make a living. The men went north to work... They went north to the seaside girls" (96).

After Siyam's drowning, the women who were doubly estranged; first because their men: fathers, sons, and husbands, left them, and second because they were left behind, not in their old homes, but in an exile; lost their self-control. As Asha exclaims:

The women, who were as stable and solid as a pillar of rock, had lost their stability. They wept for Siyam. They wept at the fate of their husbands and sons in exile. Terrified of an unknown future, they bemoaned their lot, the migration of the men to the north, to the painted white women of the north, and the danger of seduction. They were left with the burning heat of the sun and the parched earth of their drowned land, and their own inevitable destiny. (112)

Based on the previous presentation of the multi-faceted forms of inequities that women faced, it can be inferred that the building of dams, that already had oppression on indigenous cultures in general, oppressed women severely, both physically and psychologically. In addition, the interrelated injustices of dams are extended to include the oppression of water as well.

## Conclusion

The answer to all these atrocities that are faced by American Indians and Nubians in general, and their women in particular, as well as the violence against water, all caused by the building of dams, is what Shiva calls: "The recovery of the feminine principle" (50). The base for the recovery of the feminine principle is the inclusion of nature, women, and men: "In nature it implies seeing nature as a live organism. In woman it implies seeing women as productive and active. Finally, in men the recovery of the feminine principle implies a relocation of action and activity to create life-enhancing, not life-reducing and life-threatening societies" (51). "The death of the feminine principle" happens when women and nature are associated with unproductivity and passivity, and the death of it in men happens when "a shift in the concept of activity from creation to destruction and the concept of power from empowerment to domination" takes place (51). Thus the solution is not patriarchal; it lies in respecting our nature, because it is the disregard of nature and the breach of building dams that got humans in these atrocities in the first place. A reunion with land and native cultures, establishing a relationship of inclusion between humans and their environment, and demolishing dualisms of man/nature, culture/nature, male/female, white/colored, are essential commandments that must be followed in order to save the environment and make earth a more habitual place for generations to come.

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