

Role of Women in the task of environment protection and conservation

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In the current era, environmental degradation has become a growing problem and concern of people. It has serious effects on all the elements of the society. Government, NGOs, women are all trying to conserve the environment. Keeping in mind that environmental conservation is everyone's responsibility, the present study is an attempt to examine the knowledge, attitudes and practices of women regarding environmental conservation and protection. This paper focuses on the theories of ecofeminism, environmental movements and activities that bring about changes in the conditions that threaten the environment.

The present paper is based on the secondary source and tries to understand the role of women in the environment conservation.

Keywords: Environment conservation, Ecofeminism, Environmental degradation

I. Introduction:

Environment has emerged as a major area of world-wide concern in recent years. The developing world suffers from pollution and degradation of natural resources. The debate on the women, environment, and development (WED) began in the early 1970s due, largely in part, to the oil crisis. In Mexico-City, in 1975, at the First World Conference on Women, Vandana Shiva introduced the issue of women and the environment. The lack of environmental awareness is another major factor responsible for the environmental problems.

If Women are most affected by environmental degradation, then What is the role of women in the task of environment protection and conservation? what can she do for the herself and community This is considered in the following research paper.

Keywords: Environment conservation, Ecofeminism, Environmental degradation

II. Objectives:

To study the theoretical perspective for the relationship between Women and Environment

To study an impact of environmental issues on women.

To study the environmental movements, led by women

To study the Environmental NGO's activity lead by Women

To study the Rural women's activity regarding environment conservation

To study the role of women in conserving the environment

III. Methodology:

This study is based on the secondary data only.

My paper is distributed in 6 parts. In the first of this paper, I will discuss the relationship between women and environment on theoretical perspective followed in the second part by extensive discussion on an impact of environmental issues on women. In The third part, I have explained the role of women for protecting environment through Indian environmental movements led by women. The fourth part of my study describes what women-led NGOs can do to improve the environment with special reference to ARBUTs NGO. The fifth part of my study is presented with an example of what an uneducated rural woman can do in the context of environment and the last part of my study end with some suggestions, conclusion and finding regarding the role of women in the task of environment protection and conservation.

I) The theoretical perspective for the Relationship between women and environment.

Ecofeminism: Ecofeminism is a branch of feminism. The term "ecofeminism" seems to have been published for the first time in 1974 by a French feminist, Françoise d'Eaubonne, in a book entitled "Feminism or death" Ecofeminism is a philosophy, an ethic and a movement born of the conjunction and union of feminist and ecological currents of thought. Ecofeminist analysis explores the connections between women and nature in culture, religion, literature and iconography, and addresses the parallels between the oppression of nature and

the oppression of women. According to ecofeminism women are closer to nature than men. This closeness, therefore, makes women more nurturing and caring towards their environment.

Spiritual Ecofeminism /Cultural Ecofeminism: Spiritual ecofeminism is branch of ecofeminism. According to this an earth-based spirituality, which recognizes that the Earth is alive, that we are interconnected, as well as a community. Spiritual ecofeminism is not linked to one specific religion, but is centered around values of caring, compassion, and non-violence. Carolyn Merchant In her book *Radical Ecology* refers to spiritual ecofeminism as "cultural ecofeminism." According to Merchant, cultural ecofeminism, "celebrates the relationship between women and nature through the revival of ancient rituals centered on goddess worship, the moon, animals, and the female reproductive system. In India there is a long historical tradition between human beings and nature. This tradition is preserved through social and religious customs and cultural practices' such as Vatpournima, Tulsipooja, Nagpanchami, bailpola etc. This tradition shows examples of people's restrained approach towards nature and respect for ecological balance. In Indian tradition Moon is a brother of women, earth is a mother of human beings. River is a life for them. In this way in Indian society Relation of women and nature is as a family member.

Materialist ecofeminism: Materialist dimension of ecofeminism may also be referred to as "social feminism," "socialist ecofeminism," or "Marxist ecofeminism." A materialist view connects some institutions such as labor, power, and property as the source of domination over women and nature. There are connections made between these subjects because of the values of production and reproduction. Ecofeminism in this sense seeks to eliminate social hierarchies which favor the production of commodities (dominated by men) over biological and social reproduction.

Environmental or ecological Feminism: Environmental or ecological feminism is more focused on the actual, specific interactions with the environment connections between environment and gender can be made by looking at the gender divisions of labor and environmental roles. The gender division of labor requires a more nurturing and caring role for women, therefore, that caring nature places women closer to the environment. The knowledge of nature is shaped by the experiences an individual has. Women have the distinct knowledge of the land. There is a challenge to not only focus on the gender division of labor but also the actual appropriation methods of the resources. In other words, there is not simply an inherent connection between women and nature: rather there are material realities that exist.

A study of the various perspectives of ecofeminists reveals that gender analysis is necessary if environmental problems are to be solved. Theory of ecofeminism, which is a field bridging ecological ethics and feminism that seeks to explore the conceptual connections between environmental degradation and sexist oppression. Hence according to the environmental feminist theory, women will not be left out while dealing with environmental issues. All these theories highlight the Women and environment are closely bounded.

II Impact of environment on women: Environmental parameters that affect human health include physical, biological social and psychological factors. The pollution caused in the water, air, and mines created immense problems of women. Particularly in rural areas, women and children find themselves disproportionately affected by water. The serious threat for women comes from the use of pesticides. These pesticides may be especially harmful to women because of their high illiteracy rate or the inability to read the language on the label. However even more important is women's lack of power to protest against may be especially the use of these pesticides and their own bad working conditions. Among the consequences there are miscarriages and stillbirths. According to United Nations Chronicle Journal researcher have found an association between breast cancer and the pesticide DDT and its derivative DDE. Studies have shown the direct effects of chemicals and pesticides on women health.

III) Environmental movements, led by women: There have been many movements of women in the context of women's issues and their women's power has come to be known to the world. Bishnoi's movement laid the foundation of environment protection movement in India. This movement started by Amrita Bai in 1731 A.D. While the axemen were cutting the trees, martyr Amrita Devi hugged one of the trees.

Chipko movement One of the environmentalist movements which was inspired by women was the Chipko movement (Women tree-huggers in India). "Its name comes from a Hindi word meaning "to stick" (as in glue). The movement was an act of defiance against the state government's permission given to a corporation for commercial logging. Women of the villages resisted, embracing trees to prevent their felling to safeguard their lifestyles which were dependent on the forests. Deforestation could qualitatively alter the lives of all village residents, but it was the women who agitated for saving the forests. Organized by a non-governmental organization that Chandi Prasad Bhatt led, the Chipko movement adopted the slogan "ecology is permanent economy."

Above study shows that environmental issues in particular that women are more responsive to nature for example women readily become active in campaigns about environmental issues and are over represented at the local level in formal environmental movements.

Navdanya Movement Navdanya also was known as the 'Nine Seeds Movement' seeks to empower local Indian farmers to move away from growing any genetically modified organism (GMOs) on their land and return to organic, chemical-free practices. Navdanya fights to eliminate the commercialization of indigenous knowledge also known as 'Biopiracy'. Navdanya addresses multiple other international issues, including climate change, food security, and misapplication of technology, food sovereignty, fair trade, and many others. This movement also created a learning center entitled Bija Vidyapeeth. Bija Vidyapeeth, in collaboration with Schumacher College in the United Kingdom, seeks to educate participants in sustainable and ecological principles. Vandana Shiva is a world-renown environmental scholar and activist and she has made great strides for women in India as well as around the world. As a physicist-environmentalist adhering to ecofeminism, Vandana Shiva has published numerous papers on the unequal burden placed on women by environmental degradation, stating that women and children "bore the costs but were excluded from the benefits" of development. Vandana Shiva is also an active voice for localized, organic agriculture and she began a movement entitled Navdanya where participating Indian farmers have created 'freedom zones' to keep their crops free of chemicals to revitalize an organic food market in India. She has received many honorary degrees, awards. In 1993, she received the Right Livelihood Award. In 2010, Sydney Peace Prize and in 2011, she received the Calgary Peace Prize. In addition, Vandana Shiva was named "one of the 7 most influential women in the world." by Forbes.

The major trend in the environmental protection movements in India emphasises the fact that most participants are women, Adivasi's, and poor people. All these movements highlighted the role of women's voices and perspectives in sustainable development. Therefore, these movements show that conservation of environment cannot be done without participation of women at planning, training and actual implementing stage.

IV To study the Environmental NGO's activity lead by Women in Pune City

Arbutus, is Pune base grassroot level NGO started in 1976 for achieving a green and sustainable social development. For this purpose, it has undertaken various activities, which have over the years become success stories. Dr Meera Bondre, Founder-Trustee of Arbutus. Arbutus, whose main thrust, is on Awareness, Education, and Networking for sustainable development. Dr Meera Bondre was given the prestigious National Award, the Bharat Jyoti Award for the year 2003, for her work in the area of scientific research, environmental protection, and education.

The **Success** story is of a lake in Pune's Model Colony area, which was leased out by the Municipal Corporation of the city to a construction company in 1985, and a five-star hotel was to come up in its place. Arbutus gathered support of citizens and got organized into a very active group. It was as if all they were totally committed to this one cause. Arbutus contacted the governmental and intergovernmental environmental and social organizations. Arbutus also wrote letters to the Chief Minister, the Urban Development Minister, and even the Prime Minister. Arbutus approached the press, gave interviews, wrote articles, and even came over the radio. Arbutus organized signature campaigns. Arbutus filed a suite in the Pune court. A lot of editorials were written and many news items appeared in the daily newspapers. The 'Lakaki' lake, as it is commonly referred to, became the burning issue in the city. As a result of all these concerted efforts, the pumping of water was stopped. However, the water level had gone down by about 8 inches. The pipelines were not yet removed from the site. In this circumstances leader of the Arbutus create an environmental awareness among the young and the old, literate and illiterate, knowledgeable scientists and laymen. Not everyone supported cause; in fact, there were many who opposed it. Some were even scientists who themselves carried the impression and also propagated it that the lake was nothing but a huge garbage bin. However, Arbutus was not ready to leave the battle half way. Arbutus, organized an open-air laboratory on the very banks of this lake. Arbutus took hundreds of children and adults of the city, including corporators, MLAs and other respected citizens. Those who attended the laboratory saw for themselves that the water did not smell in spite of the heavy load of organic pollution, and that there were no mosquitoes. The beautiful birds attracted their attention. The children particularly enjoyed the sight of the swimming buffaloes. They also saw fishermen using their nets and harvesting large amounts of Tilapia every day from this lake. Arbutus explained the concepts of interaction and interdependence with the help of coloured charts, made by older Arbutus children. Arbutus explained how open spaces and water bodies play an important role in regulating a city's climate. The whole programme was a great success. Combined efforts finally produced the desired result! The then Urban Development Minister visited the area and announced that the lake shall be preserved. On July 9, 1985, a resolution to that effect was passed in the Standing Committee of the Pune Municipal Corporation.

Arbutus fought and won in all its glory. In these situations, the city's aware and active citizens and NGOs should come together and fight to save the environment from deteriorating. Similar is the story of this environmental

battle, in which Dr. Meera and Arwind Bondre, under the auspices of Arbutus actively participated and finally succeeded in conserving a natural resource in an urbanized and fast developing city like Pune.

Hence, Leader of Arbutus has created environment awareness among teacher, students of the Pune city through Campaigning (environmental rights/development related issues such as tree felling, filling up of lakes, construction in river beds.) exhibitions, projects, posters, slogans, conducting workshops/ lectures/ seminars, performing arts etc. Booklet produced by Arbutus "Environmental education through games" which is handbook proves very effective for school going children. Arbutus has also tried experimenting with mythological concepts and have tried to relate them to the current context. Arbutus has explored novel themes like 'A Fisherman Community Dance', depicting intricacies of the fishermen's lives, 'Krishna Kaliya', which Arbutus has adapted to the concept of Water Pollution and Conversion, 'Water Cycle through Classical Dance', 'Life in an Indian Village with reference to Water'. Arbutus feels that if these difficult concepts are explained through the aesthetic medium of performing arts, it immediately attracts the interest of not just the performing artistes, but also the audience in the area of scientific research, environmental protection, and education.

Thus, leader of the ARBUTUS Dr Meera Bondare has created awareness through educational Activity regarding environmental conservation among the local people.

V th To study the Rural women's activity regarding environment conservation with special reference to Rahibai Popere

Rahibai Soma Popere is an Indian farmer and environment conservationist. She is from Kombhalene village located in Akole block of Ahmednagar district in the State of Maharashtra. She has no formal education. She has worked on farms and has an extraordinary understanding of crop diversity. She developed a series of hyacinth beans for self-help groups and families in nearby villages. She has created her own methods to harvest water on farms; turning wasteland into space she can use productively. She trains farmers and students on ways to select seeds, keep fertile soils and manage pests. She is skilled in four-step paddy cultivation. Rahibai Popere has been honored with the following honors so far in recognition of her work. BBC 100 women 2018, The best seed Saver award, BAIF Development Research Foundation Best Farmer Award, Nari Shakti Puraskar 2018 by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, Padma Shri 2020 by Government of India. Study of Rahibai's work prove that women are close to nature hence they have indigenous knowledge and perceptions of about endangered plants, including food and medicinal plants.

It also observes that the role of women in the home garden and community livelihood programs in enhancing household food security. The life of rural women is so much intertwined with the environment that whole ecosystem revolves around her and she can't even think of her survival without it. These rural women tend to have a closer relationship with land and other natural resources, which promotes a new culture of respectful use and preservation of natural resources and the environment, ensuring that the following generations can meet their needs, observed that women play a key role in managing their natural surroundings and adopt several mechanisms to deal with the kinds of environmental crisis they face.

Study of the Meera Bondare's and Rahi Bai work show that women's are closer to nature and this very close relationship making them perfect managers of an ecosystem. It is emphasized that is closely related to the nature involvement of women would help societies develop the sense of responsibility needed to maintain a good balance between human's and earth resources. Women's awareness of home garden-oriented activities that support environmental conservation. It highlights the role of rural women in agricultural development and village women have acquired awareness and knowledge, developed attitudes, skills, perspective regarding environmental issue. This environmental education helps to sustainable development. Hence study shows that those who are educated or non-educated all types of women's participation is important for sustainable development. Besides considering how to achieve appropriate agricultural production and human nutrition, women want to secure access to the land.

From the above ecofeminism theoretical studies, women's environmental movement and the study of Meera Bandare and Rahibai's work, it is observed that women are more responsive to environment than in development programme. Environmental problems can be controlled by creating environmental consciousness among women. Women empowerment, active participation of women in various movement is necessary for environmental development. Sustainable management of natural resources can be achieved by enhancing the full participation of all relevant. Environmental education is the only way to improve environmental development.

Some suggestions: From the above study, For the betterment of women and environment I have made some suggestion. For the women's development, their education and health services should be improved. Involvement of women as a decision maker, planners, technical advisers, managers and extension workers in environment and development fields have to Increase. For the Economic independence of the women Property

rights and land rights should be equally shared with women. This economic independence of women which will be helpful for betterment of women as well as environment.

In conclusion, it can be said that environmental programme should be central around women and they should be consciously involved from planning to implementation.

Role of Women in Environment conservation

Study shows that Women concerned with environment and development issues do play an important role in working towards, environment conservation. The researcher has observed the following the role of women from the study of theoretical perspectives, various activities, women's participation movements about environment conservation.

Study shows that Women can do Mobilization of Masses through training camps/ workshops, public meeting and rallies, demonstrations, protest marches and agitations organized also they can Assisting and catalyzing the process of awareness raising programmes among masses. Women can Influencing on decision makers through lobbying, providing information, organizing seminars, and other means, so as to help reorient development and environment policies. Result of the women action shows that advocacy role of women which will be helpful for influencing policies and programmes of the government or that of similar bodies in the corporate sector.

Women can success to obtain Mustering support from political parties, other voluntary organizations and the print as well as electronic media. Hence, women's role helps people to discover the symptoms and the real causes of environmental problems. It also helps to increased sensitivity and knowledge towards environment.

Above environmental activities of women with the help of local participation are eminently suited to as catalysts of social change, as educators, as informers, enablers, project planners, as administrators, as innovators, as awareness creator, as motivators, as a nation builder. Hence study highlight that these roles of women are important for environment conservation.

IV. Conclusion-

Above studies on women and environment have shown that women are very close and responsive to nature. They have sensitiveness towards Environment. They have high ecological consciousness. Studies show that they are significant actors in natural resource management and they are major contributors to environmental rehabilitation and conservation. Women have a vital role in environmental management and development. Therefore, their full participation is essential to achieving sustainable development. In this way as a mother, as a responsive to nature, planner, designs maker, active participate manager the role of women to locally and globally in the tactic of environmental protection and conservation is more important for the sustainable development.

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