

WOMAN: THE SAVIOUR OF EARTH

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“Those who contemplate the beauty of the earth find reserves of strength that will endure as long as life lasts. There is something infinitely healing in the repeated refrains of nature—the assurance that dawn comes after night, and spring after winter.”

— Rachel Carson

Abstract:

From time immemorial there has been a subtle relationship between women and the environment. In fact she is looked upon as a part of nature. But in this garb of expansion, industrialization, modernization, both women and environment are being neglected. The natural resources, which are getting degraded, are interfering with women's responsibilities towards domestic sphere, which has a negative impact on women, psychologically and physically. This article trace the role & responsibility of women for safeguarding the Mother Earth.

Key Words:.. Environment, Pollution, Protection, natural resources, ecosystem, degradation, safeguard, implementation

Traditionally women have been responsible for subsistence and survival economics and culturally accepted division of labour within the family, leaving the collection of fuel fodder and water for house hold needs to women. Due to environmental degradation it has become a difficult task to obtain and women have to spend more and more time searching for them, other house hold work like cooking, child rearing, agricultural work and caring of animals has to be done in addition. The deep connection between women and men comes from the daily interaction between them. According to Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings, Women always worry about the things that men forget; men always worry about the things women remember.

Women and Environment

Natural management is a recent issue from a global perspective. If we discuss on: Whom do we find in the lead of the race, for protection and preservation of the resources? The answer comes very naturally, it is woman. Women particularly those living in rural areas or mountain areas have special relationship with the environment. All women have relationship with environment but the approach is different from Urban Areas. They are more close to the nature than men and this very close relationship makes them perfect managers of an eco-system. Woman is so much intertwined with the environment that whole ecosystem gyrates around her and she can't even think of her survival without it. For her forest is her mother's home as she is entirely dependent on the forest to meet her daily needs such as - water, fodder, fuels, minor forest product etc.

Women are considered the primary users of natural resources namely land, forest, and water in the world, because they are the one who are responsible for gathering food, fuel, and fodder. Though in many countries, women mostly can't own the land and farms absolute, they are the ones who devote most of their time to employing on the farms to feed the family. Carrying this duty leads them to learn more about soil, plants, and trees and not misuse them. Even though, hi-tech inputs growth male participation with land, many of them leave the farm to go to cities to find jobs; hence, women become ever more responsible for an increasing portion of farm tasks.

Women in the rural areas incline to have a closer relationship with land and other natural resources. It encourages a new culture of respectful use and conservation of natural resources. The surroundings are safeguarding the succeeding generations, can meet their needs. Women want to secure access to the land, further considering how to achieve appropriate agricultural production and human nutrition.

Men's perceptions and values for the environment are somewhat different and lesser than Women's, which put extra mileage to safeguard the mother earth. To be caring for nature and environment's future, they give not only provide greater priority for the protection of land but also improving the capacity of nature, and maintaining farming lands. Repeated studies have shown that women have a stake in environment, and this stake is reflected in the degree to which they care about natural resources. In woman's life caring about the environment has always been playing a big part and pivotal role.

Environmental history books have mostly focused on men's roles, and generally women's involvement with nature has been ignored and unsung. Even historical texts have been deficient in writing about women participation in environmentalist actions. So, the result is that women's role in environmental struggles and debates about nature has been hidden from history.

However, in reviewing recent centuries, the environmental crises, be able to noticed, women of every social class, nation, or color had raised their concerns about the environment more outstandingly and responsibly. According to Bella Abzug, one of the founders and regional co-chairs of U.S. based Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO), in the environment and the world around, woman always be a powerful force for positive changes in ecologically surrounded by them. Their increasingly nature-focused activities want to prove to the world that they can make a difference.

Identify the Environmental Problem

A problem statement should be developed that is descriptive enough to allow a regulatory agency to determine whether or not the problem justifies action. Effective problem statements include enough research to analyze and document why the problem is serious enough to be addressed; are presented in such a way that measurable results can be obtained after the implementation of a solution; clearly define the pollutant or indicator and the environmental risks posed by it; define the geographic boundaries of the problem; and indicate whether the vehicle for the environmental threat stems from a non-compliance issues, namely Contamination of Soil, Water Pollution, Non-Vegetarian Diet, Genetic Erosion, Depletion of Ozone Layer , Hazardous waste disposal.

Women as victim

Natural resource depletion and environmental degradation has direct consequences for women's time, income, health and social support system. The awareness of women regarding the forest produces which have high herbal and medicinal value gained through long experience is vanishing with deforestation. Unconscious and ruthless exploitation of natural resources, which resulted in environmental degradation, has a direct impact on women.

About two to three million people in the forest and tribal belts of India earn their livelihood by carrying fuel load on their head and of these, 90 per cent are women. Despite the harsh nature of the work, many women have taken to it in the last two decades, as it is the only work available to them. The year round collections of minor forest produce and herbs have traditionally provided extra income, valuable nutrition and medical support. As women operate in a labour intensive and non-monetized economy, they have become victims of landlords, profiteers, business magnets, middlemen and also the men in their families.

Current research exposed that, women are the direct victims of such, ecological degradation, pollution etc. because their household activities depends on environment to illustrate, in some areas a few decades back women went to fetch water from sources that were far away from their house. But now, because of excessive mining and allied activities, they have to walk miles together for a pot of drinking water.

Today, women struggle against alarming global trends, but they are working together to effective change. Many women have recognized themselves and acknowledge, by establishing domestic and international non-governmental organizations, to the world that they not only have the right to participate in the eradication of environmental problems. But they have different relationship with environment including different needs, responsibilities, and knowledge about natural resources. This is why women are affected differently than men by environmental degradation, deforestation, pollution and overpopulation. Mostly, women are often directly affected by environmental issues, so they become more concerned about environmental problems. Investigations have shown the direct effects of chemicals and pesticides on human health especially women.

According to United Nations Chronicle journal researchers have found an association between breast cancer and the pesticide and its derivative; and also a study by the World Health Organization has found that, women who exposed to pesticides are face a higher risk of abortion, and other such kinds of health problems cause women to feel more responsible regarding environmental issues.

Though environmental degradation affects the human beings in general, but women are considered to be the main victims of environmental degradation. Women displayed the ecological destruction through deforestation, development projects, water management projects pollution and wrong land use practices has

being replaced to productive activities. Relevant legal provision on environment is enshrined in the Constitution in each and every nation all over the world.

Implementation of the Plan

The development of a step-by-step plan is worthless without implementation. This last stage of environmental problem solving involves implementing the plan through careful scheduling; identifying key challenges and opportunities; and evaluating milestones and progress. Once stakeholders identify and begin a work plan, if periodic evaluations show that the desired progress is not being made, then they can re-visit their strategies and evaluate a revised work plan. It is through this kind of adaptive management strategy that newly developed technologies and ideas can influence the successful resolution of an environmental problem. The government should have a nationwide plan for how and where (fracking) extracting anything under ground will be allowed in agricultural areas. The most productive agricultural areas should be off limits to the fracking industry to protect our national food supply.

Women and Environment Sustainability

"Women have a significant role in environmental management and development. Their full participation is therefore essential to achieving sustainable development"

The Interdependence of women with nature is evolved from the following observations:

- (i) Women are having base and skills for natural resource management
- (ii) They are better managers for natural resources.
- (iii) They have sensitiveness towards Environmental
- (iv) They have high ecological consciousness

Role of Women in Conservation of Environment

More than 70% of the Indian population is rural based. Biomass plays a crucial role in meeting daily survival needs of the vast majority of the rural households. Water is essential for survival and its availability is related to biomass. The biomass-based subsistence economy is mostly non-monetized. Production and

processing of biomass agriculture, forestry, and minor forest produce and village crafts based on biomass as raw materials, are also the biggest sources of employment. Development imperatives have inevitably led to some destruction of the biomass through deforestation and environmental degradation. Traditionally, women have been responsible for subsistence and survival for water, food, fuel, fodder and habitat, though they rarely get the credit for nurturing these life support systems. Added to these environmental destruction, exacerbates women's problems in a way very difficult from that of men. The challenge is to re-establish the symbiosis between communities, women and natural resources and reverse the trend of the negative impact of existing developmental paradigms.

Women's concern for Environmental Protection

In recent decades, environmental movements have increased as the movements for women's rights have also increased. Today's union of nature preservation with women's rights and liberation has stemmed from invasion of their rights in the past. The women's concern for environment can be traced since 1972.

Recommendations

- (i) The protection of women decision- makers, planners, advisers and managers related to environmental management should be increased.
- (ii) Environmental education should be expanded in rural areas.
- (iii) Women when once mobilized play a significant role in environmental protection.
- (iv) The potential of science and Technology should be utilized to solve environmental related problems and ease women's workload inside and outside the home.
- (v) The Central government should develop a strategy to eliminate various obstacles-constitutional, legal, administrative, social and economic in nature to women's full participation in sustainable development.
- (vi) The Government, Non- Governmental Organizations, Environmental Conservation agencies and the common man should recognize and mobilize women as active participants to protect and enrich the natural resources that sustain us.
- (vii) In spite of all these aspects there must be promotion of disseminating the gender relevant knowledge and valuations of women's role through formal and n-formal education.

The environmental degradation caused while men have had dominance over women, and women's large investment in environmental sustainability, some have theorized that women would protect the Earth better than men if in power. Although there is no evidence for this hypothesis, recent movements have shown that women are more sensitive to the earth and its problems. They have created a special value system about environmental issues. People's approaches to environmental issues may depend on their relationship with nature ex. Peepal, Awala, Tulsi, Bargad are Holistic plants & tree. Both women and nature have been considered as subordinates entities by men throughout history, which conveys a close affiliation between them. Women have always been the principal conservers of bio-diversity. Even today they perform duties such as seed selection, multiplication and conservation. The on-farm conservation traditions of rural and tribal women, with reference to agro-biodiversity are well known.

This article makes the often hidden links between women and the environment visible, with an explicit focus on women related aspects of land, water and biodiversity conservation and management. The knowledge of **environmental ethics** should also help in the conservation of natural resources.

3'R's are the solution, REDUCE, RECYCLE & REUSE

REDUCE

Consumption of natural resources to the extent possible

Emission of carbon into atmosphere

Developmental projects affecting environment

Human activities accelerating global warming and climate changes

Deforestation for developmental activities

Intake of non- biodegradable materials in everyday life

Human activities causing pollution of water bodies, air, forests, soil

Consumption of energy to reduce pollution and exploitation of nature

RECYCLE

All wasted/spent natural resources to reduce their consumption

All used materials with the available technologies

All used materials manufactured with trees/plants to reduce deforestation

REUSE

All spent natural resources to reduce more fresh consumption

All materials manufactured with trees/plants for their conservation

All recycled materials to reduce the demand also: Education. It is not this simple to solve our current-day environmental problems. There has to be a paradigm shift in our way of thought and the way we perceive our environment. Still, these ideas are being very much debated.

UNEP hopes that Women and the Environment will inspire the environmental and sustainable development community to better understand the importance of gender, and to integrate a gender perspective across all of its work. One individual cannot possibly make a difference, alone. It is individual efforts, collectively, as a whole community that makes a noticeable difference—all the difference in the world!”

There are several attributes that transcend both studying and solving environmental problems:

Credibility — needed for both peer scientists and stakeholders;

Creativity — required for developing experiments and for developing action plans;

Tenacity — persistence in the face of adversity often distinguishes success from failure;

Virtue — summed up in the quote by a fisheries biologist and Stanford University president,

David Starr Jordan, “*Wisdom is knowing what to do next; virtue is doing it*”.

Chipko Movement

A non-violent movement aimed at protection and conservation of trees and forests from being destroyed is called as Chipko Movement, which was started in 1970's. Chipko, means 'to embrace' because the villagers used to hug the trees and protect them from wood cutters from cutting them. Gandhian philosophy is behind the movement because people followed the peaceful method of resistance to achieve the goals. It was the strong uprising against those people, who were destroying the natural resources of the forests and disturbing the whole ecological balance.

In the year 1973 the movement was first started in the Chamoli district. Then it spread to the other parts of the country. In connection with this movement, a story about the girl, Amrita Devi, who died while trying to save the trees grown in her village? The village was under the rule of the local Maharaja, who desired to build a palace for his family. He ordered his servants to bring wood from the nearby village. When the wood cutters were arrived the village to cut the tress, Amrita and other women of the village jumped in front of the trees and hugged them. She said they will have to cut her first before the trees. The servants were helpless to follow the orders and cut the tree. Amrita Devi died on the spot. Before offering her head to the Maharajas servants, Amrita enchanted- "*seir santhe runkh raheb, to bhee sastojan*" (it is still a small price to pay if at the cost of my head the tree is saved).

The incident inspired the several other rural women, who in 1970's launched such similar movements in different parts of India. The incident inspired the several other rural women, who in 1970's launched such similar movements in different parts of India. It is really surprising that the women of that age were better aware about the significance of forests. The rural women in India actively participated in the movement, who knows about deforestation and its future consequences. Some of the key women leaders who fought for the protection of forests, whom they call it their maternal mother were Gaura Devi, Sudesha Devi, Bachni Devi, Dev Suman, Mira Behn, Sarala Behn and Amrita Devi.

The Chipko Movement gained momentum under Sunderlal Bahuguna, an eco-activist, who spent his whole life persuading and educating the villagers, to protest against the destruction of the forests and the Himalayan Mountains by the government. It was he, who made appeal to the Prime Minister of India Mrs Indira Gandhi to ban the cutting of tress. He shouted the slogan 'ecology is the permanent economy'. Another main leader of the movement was Mr. Chandi Prasad Bhatt, who advocated the development of small scale local industries, which were based on the sustainable use of the forests resources for the local benefits. There were many slogans that originated during that period. For example "Embrace the trees and save them from being felled. Save the property from being looted, by them in our hills," "Let us protect and plant the trees" and "Go wake up the villages and drive away the axe man"

One of the major achievement of the Chipko movement was the ban on cutting the trees for the 15 years in the forests of Uttar Pradesh in 1980. Later on the ban was imposed in Himachal Pardesh, Karnataka, Rajasthan, Bihar, Western Ghats and Vindhayas. All this was done on the order of the former Indian Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi, after the strong protests by the activists throughout the country.

Solution for Environmental Problems and its Features

Most scientists are trained to **S T U D Y** problems solving through the following features

Scientific rigor—mostly through peer review of proposals, presentations and papers;

Total commitment—extensive training to be able to collect good and appropriate data;

Understanding complexity—mainly in natural systems with multiple variables;

Developing methodology—many scientific questions require new tools or approaches;

Yearning for truth—the quest for the underlying truth provides a strong motivation.

These are important and critical skills that scientists develop during their extended educational and apprenticeship programs that lead to higher degrees.

However, in order to **S O L V E** environmental problems, a different set of attributes is required:

Shared vision—developed not with scientific peers, but stakeholders;

Organized and balanced approach—combined management, research and monitoring;

Leadership—scientific and community level leadership is required;

Varied communication—peer- group as well as non-peer group communication are essential;

Effective actions—targeting activity to channel resources intelligently.

Finally, I conclude that women playing a tremendous role in protecting the environment and as a whole, they are the saviors of earth and joins hand with the Community as depict the picture below.



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