

# Role of Women in Environment Protection

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## ABSTRACT

Environment Degradation is a serious concern of 21st century. Due to growing population and overexploitation of natural resources our environment is continuously shrinking. No month in a year can be considered free from hazard or disaster. Rapid decrement in environment quality and natural resources is an alert for all human being. Our blue planet is going to convert into concrete everywhere. Thus, the conservation and promotion of environment is needed. In 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century it was a common perception that women have no participation in environmental protection. It was thought that women are passive aspect regarding the environment conservation. Most of Indian population reside in rural areas and dependent on natural resources. Therefore, women have direct connection with natural resources like fuel, water, and food. But after spreading awareness they came to know about their rights and raised voice against the environment degradation. As a result, women had launched a number of movements for enhancing the environment quality and conservation. Women are more sensitive and play a crucial in managing natural resources on each level in society. Degradation of environment directly affects their daily life as rural women fulfill their requirement from natural resources like water, fodder etc. Today, Greta Thunberg is a global example who is fighting against climate change. In Indian aspect, lots of example of women can be seen where they made a strong protest against environmental degradation. Amrita devi, had scarified their life for the protection of environment. Medha Patekar, a social worker and Vandana Shiva have also contributed against the environment degradation. Similarly, Menka Gandhi is also playing a major role for the promotion of environment. It reveals the truth women can play a significant role in the conservation of environment. Without their participation and involvement, protection and conservation of environment is not possible. It is hopeless to maintain the values of environment conservation without involving them in planning and training. This paper puts light on the role of women in environment protection and some movement led by them.

**Keywords:** Degradation, conservation, resources, environment, promotion

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## INTRODUCTION

Environment word is derived from French 'environner' which gives word a relevant meaning that is surround. Environment includes not only the natural aspect like land, air and water but also establishes the interrelationship with human beings and other living organism. Considering women as a weak part of society their contribution was ignored even said that they had no participation in any kind of environment protection activity. But it was an opposite statement and studies have shown that women are major contributors and responsible for management of natural resources all over the world. According to World Bank 1991 "woman play an essential role in the management of natural resources, including soil, water, forest and energy and often has a profound traditional and contemporary knowledge of natural world around them". Direct connection of women with nature provided them deep understanding and depth knowledge regarding environment. Deep knowledge made them enable to serve as water resource manager and an efficient scientist among others. Due to sensitive nature, women have more consciousness towards environment. Women being primarily responsible for domestic household management interacting more intensively with environment. Therefore, the depletion and degradation of environment directly affected women scenario specially related to health, income and other social aspect. Global threat of environment degradation is now seeing by government such as climate change, dumping of hazardous wastes which is affecting the whole climatic scenario existing in the world (Tolba 1992). About 8.6% population of India is tribal population. Tribal economy is totally dependent on forest products. Almost 90% women earn their livelihood by carrying fuel load on their head but due to deforestation their source of income is spoiling.

Women have recorded several successes in solving many environments related problems all over the world. Indian women also realized that fertile land is destroying due to salinity and erosion. They collectively lease degraded land revived adopting traditional farming. As a result, 700 acres restored for productive use. It revealed that they have more sensible capacity in maintaining the ecological balance.

Mosser (1991) distinguishes between three roles of women

1. As managers or maintenance of the natural environment.
2. Rehabilitators of the natural environment in the sense of sustainable development .
3. As innovators in the use of appropriate technology in the creation of new environment.

Dinkelman and Davidson (1998) observed that women role in managing the natural resources is more effective. Several kinds of mechanism can be hold by them in dealing with environment loss.

### **Women Endeavor for Environment Protection**

Awareness has been increased in this area since 1995 by different international organization to document the role of women in environmental related issues and natural resource management. The main global women's assembly on environment organized women as a voice for the climate (WAVE), was coordinated by United Nations environmental program in close joint effort with common society gatherings and the network of women ministers on environment. So, Assembly was pointed toward putting ladies' issues at the focal point of worldwide ecological endeavors brought about a Manifesto on women and climate change. There is more documentation on ladies 'activism on natural issues.

### **Several Movement and Ecofeminist around the World**

**Green Belt movement:** In June 1977, this movement was started on world environment day and led by Nobel Prize winner Wangari Maathai. About 80,000 women involved in it for tree plantation. Main objective of this movement was restoration of Kenya's rapidly diminishing forest.

**Rachel Carson:** Rachel Carson was a scientist, writer and ecologist famous as an outstanding personality. She wrote many books in which *Silent Spring* is focused on environment. She believed that human and nature both are dependent each other. According to Carson, use of pesticides and industrial activities destroying the environment. In future this destruction will convert into a curse. Therefore, she focused that scientific study is basic requirement to overcome on these problems.

**Marina Silva:** Famous as a warrior of amazon Silva contributed as a protector of rainforest in Brazil. She became a politician also and fought for environmental protection. That is why deforestation decreased about 59% in her career.

**Wangari Maathai:** Wangari Maathai was the founder of Green Belt Movement. She worked in the direction of environment conservation and sustainable development. Due to her environment concern she was awarded as Nobel Prize.

### **Environment Movement Run by Indian Women**

#### **Chipko movement:**

Chipko movement is well known movement which was started in 1973 at Garhwal division of Utter Pradesh considered a collective mobilation of women. Sunderlal Bahuguna, Gauri Devi, Bachi Devi and all women regarding Garhwal led this movement following the slogan "Ecology is permanent economy". The villagers hugged the trees and prevented them to hacked. Chipko movement stand out as eco-feminist as women were the nucleus of this movement.

#### **Contribution of Bishnoi community:**

Amrita devi led the movement with all villagers protesting the Royal order of Maharaja Abhay Singh to cutting the Khejri trees. Amrita devi and her three daughters were beheaded for not obeying the order. She declared, "If a tree is saved even at the cost of one's head it's worth". Thus 363 people lost their life protecting trees. Bishnoi community is known for its ecofriendly principles like indigenous agriculture method and ban on killing animals. This was the foundation of environment conservation movement in India.

#### **Silent Valley Movement:**

Silent valley movement was originated from Kerla in western ghatt in 1976. Kerala Government permitted to construct a dam for hydroelectric project in silent valley forest. Sugatha Kumari led this movement and succeeded. Finally the project was cancelled by government. As a result, this area was declared as National Park.

## CONCLUSION

This paper discussed about the role and different aspect of woman regarding environment protection. The issue of environment protection come up more strongly after the industrial revolution, and woman participation also played an important role which continues even today. This planet is the property of entire human race so the responsibility of environment protection should be for both versions (male and female). Human beings have been classified into male and female, that is why their goals and responsibilities have been divided separately. But both they need to work together to face problem like environment degradation. Women should provide proper training and their association with decision making approach. Women are able to understand and realize environment issue due to their sensitivity, so their views should be considered in planning project also.

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