

## Marching towards Sustainability - Role of Women in Environmental Conservation

Manjunath K. V. Assistant professor ,Department of Political Science, Government First Grade College , Bangaru Tirupathi , Kolar district , Karnataka state

**Abstract:** Women & environment conservation is a decisive issue which is being debated today. Since time immemorial, women have been a part of this environment & its conservation. Vedic scriptures considered women as the goddesses of environment & her revered position as the conceiver of ecology was considered a celestial. But gradually women & her role was sidelined in environment .She was under estimated to be too feeble to take any decisive role in environmental issues. But studies have shown that women can contribute to conservation of ecology on par with men because women have the rare aptitude to contribute to conservation & safe guarding of nature's bliss. Studies have also shown that women can become pioneers in evolving strategies towards maintaining ecological balance. But the strategy of the policy makers towards involving women in decision making with regard to formulation of environmental issues needs an appraisal. This paper reflects on considering women as a key stake holder in environmental policy formulation process & considers strategies towards women's role in environmental conservation in the changing global scenario.

**Keywords:** women, environmental conservation, environmental policy

### Introduction

Ancient Indian literature is replete with instances of human bonds with nature as they knew the key role nature would play in human existence. But gradually the nature delicacies were disregarded by over

pouring commercial ambitions. But the scenario became further detrimental because women were excluded from any programs involving environment.

### Objectives of the Paper

5. This research article tries to find answer to hindrances to women inclusion in environmental policy making

6. This paper wishes to focus on role of women in conserving environment.

7. This paper wishes to focus on women becoming aware of their potentialities as environment friendly stake holders

### **Concept of Environmental Conservation**

Performance of women as managers of the environment can be gauged from the successful community forestry development programmes across the globe.( Ram pandit & Eddie Bevilacqua, (2011).Social Heterogeneity and Community Forestry Process) .This community forestry development program has been a success even in India. Women have been involved in several governmental & nongovernmental forestry & environment programs.

1. chipko movement / vriksha andolan / vriksha mitra

2. Community forestry programs

3. Social forestry programs

4. Individual conservation programs

5. SHGs conservation programs

6. Green-Belt movement

7. keep the city clean programs

8. green India clean India programs

The sustainable use of the environment by women is the result of their closeness to nature. Most women, especially in rural areas, are involved in household activities like the collection of food, water, fodder and fuel, which enhance their knowledge of the environment, thus enabling them to implement the appropriate conservation practices and technologies.( Ram pandit & Eddie Bevilacqua, (2011).Social Heterogeneity and Community Forestry Process) .Women in India are considered to be close to nature, both in imagination

and practice. Examples from the Chipko or the Green-Belt movement or the successful women-managed community forests across the world are important milestones that highlight women's efforts and capabilities towards conservation of environment. (Mishra, A., & Tripathi, (1978). Chipko movement: Uttaranchal women's bid to save forest wealth). The perennial reliance of women on nature & its products gives them knowledge on conservation. Women can work in groups to share their knowledge and ideas for the sustainability of the environment. (Vandana Shiva - Staying alive: women, ecology, and development 2011).

### **Lessons from Chipko Movement**

Women's participation in the Chipko agitation was a very novel aspect of the movement. The movement achieved a victory when the government issued a ban on felling of trees in the Himalayan regions. The

movement became popular because women protested against harming forest products such as honeybees, fruit trees, firewood trees etc. This was a realistic example of women enterprising towards risking their family relations against a social cause. The movement also supported women to fight for social issues such as alcoholism, sexual atrocities by forest contractors, displacement, forced evacuation of tribal people from forest area etc. (Mishra, A., & Tripathi, (1978). Chipko movement: Uttaranchal women's bid to save forest wealth).

**Women Initiatives** –following the examples of such social environmental movements women can make several initiatives towards

1. setting up cooperatives to guard local forests
2. organizing fodder production with local resources
3. replanting degraded land
4. running nurseries
5. land rotation cropping system

6. water management
7. energy conservation
8. using of solar panels for household cooking
9. waste recycling
10. plastic usage etc

**Group Initiatives** – women can also make tremendous contributions to balancing nature’s treasures through group awareness which could leave a great impact. Women groups such as SHGs can be involved in

1. Composting
2. Conversion of waste to manure
3. Creation of awareness on clean sanitation habits
4. Drainage management with local resources
5. Garbage disposal in right direction
6. Hygienic preservation of seeds
7. Nursery plant management
8. Organized farming with traditional methods

9. Preventing causes of salinity
10. Preventing soil erosion
11. Pure drinking water management
12. Solid waste management
13. Waste water management etc

Women can form collective groups to inculcate the awareness about keeping the household environment clean & tidy. This can be achieved through orientation / training / awareness camps to women in groups. Women can be made to involve themselves in group discussion about environmental issues. They can make collective leadership towards containing environment pollution. ( David C. Pitt -Future of the Environment: The Social Dimensions of Conservation and Ecological Alternatives ).

**Individual initiatives - each** woman can help the process of protection of environment individually in following ways

1. Lessening solid waste
2. Bifurcating waste soluble

3. Organize farming on traditional ways
4. Identifying their roles as participants in environment management
5. Earmarking individual priorities
6. Managing domestic cooking waste
7. Using solar cooking panels
8. Using energy efficient bulbs
9. constraints on water consumption
10. sanitation awareness

### **Strategies for Women Empowerment through Conservation**

Women empowerment is possible through environmental conservation if women are made a part of the environmental decision making policy formulation when environmental issues are at stake. ( David C. Pitt -Future of the Environment: The Social Dimensions of Conservation and Ecological Alternatives

2012).But most of the countries neglect the role of women during environmental policy making. Following strategies can be considered

#### **1. Involvement in decision making**

Environmental decision making at all levels should include women. Women can be policy managers, policymakers, policy implementers, policy evaluators, policy planners, policy designers, policy promulgators. Etc. women can play multi-dimensional role in safeguarding environment.

#### **2. Providing awareness-**

every woman is skillful hence she needs information on environment which can benefit her whole existence. She requires complete information, hence capacity building activities of women towards enriching her knowledge about environment needed.

#### **3. Outreach programs -**

women's knowledge about bio diversity, climatic changes, pollution, and deforestation should be enhanced through trainings & orientations.

Programs & sessions about the sharing of personal experiences of women local & indigenous about preservation of a healthier environment is needed.

#### 4. **Community**

**involvement-** local communities & their rich experiences of traditional conservative methods can be made useful. Community as a whole should be involved in sharing the environmental issues.

#### 5. **Local technological**

**support** -Indigenous methods of herbal living along with local technological support are needed. Women should be made known about the legalities of having a clean & clear technology. She should possess knowledge about wrong use of technology & irrational application of technology. The harm created by impractical application of technical inputs should be shared among women of all classes & groups .These programs will give supportive aid for women to rethink about women's role in adding to environmental sustainability (

David C. Pitt -Future of the Environment: The Social Dimensions of Conservation and Ecological Alternatives 2012 ).

#### 6. **Gender perspective**

- women should be made aware of the gender perspective in the designing & implementation of the women should be made to plan & design projects for environmental protection by their experiences.

#### 7. **Education support-**

the impact of environmental degradation should be made known to women through curriculums in schools & colleges , research centers , higher educational institutions etc. hence women need educational support.

### **Conclusion**

Women can play a vital role in conserving environment. Ecological balance is an important aspect of new approach to nation's development, and women's concern with local ecological stakeholder ship is vital to women empowerment process. All the decision-making,

evaluation and control of environment stay at the top with planners and policy makers, while participants & real beneficiaries lack the scope to develop their own skills or to have any political say in deciding their own aptitude towards conservation. If social and political situation of women has to change towards virtual empowerment then women have to be made a key part of policy making & decision making process. Environment is in danger & women can play a great role in safeguarding it with methodical aptitude & propensity.

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