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Ujjal Das
Research Scholar,
Mahapurusha Srimanta
Sankaradeva Viswavidyalaya
(MSSV), Nagaon, Assam,
India

Role of women in environmental protection

Ujjal Das

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Abstract

Environment is the nature and surrounding in which all plants, animals, human being and others living and non living things on the other hands women are better half part of society. Relationship between women and environment are closely connected. They are the manager of resources of the family and directly collect water and fuel from the nature. Women are playing a key role in protection of environment and its preservation. The publication of “Women’s Role in Economic Development” by Ester Boserup in 1970 made emphasized on women role in protection and preservation of environment. Now women are understanding impact of environmental degradation on society and therefore they are working for the protection of environment for the future generations. The World Bank report, 1991 said that women were playing an essential role in management of natural resources, including soil, water, forest and energy and also have past and present knowledge regarding the natural world or environment around them. India’s Chipko movement, Narmada Bachao Andolon, Kenya’s Green Belt movement and others various women movement took place for the protection of environment. Environmentalist activist like Jane Goodall, Greta Thunberg, Malaika Vaz, Katherine Hayhoe, Julia Lorraine Hill, Rachel Carson, Vandana Shiva, Sunita Narraine, Sumaira Abdulali, Kinkari Devi, Medha Patkar, Menaka Gandhi and many more are playing a key role for the protection of environment. In the 42nd Amendment Act of 1976 of the Indian constitution have made a fundamental duty to protect and improve of the natural environment. Women roles in protection will be become more active and fruitful when men of the society stand with the women by holding hand in hand.

Keywords: Women, environment, surrounding, movement, nature, economic, development

Introduction

The word Environment derived from French word ‘Environ’ which means surround. Environment is the nature and surrounding in which all plants, animals, humans and other living beings live and operate. It is the interrelationships of land, water and air among themselves and with all living and non-living. Our human society and environment or nature has an inseparable bonding. Society emerged as per the prevailing environment therefore the living styles, dressing, food culture, language and festivities occasion of people are distinct different accordingly various environment. As example people living in hilly area have separate culture and habit from people living in plain areas. Environment can be divides into two category i.e. Natural environment and Men made environment. With the explosion of human population environment had started degraded very harshly due to which today entire world suffering from Global Warming, frequent Earthquake, explosion of Volcanoes, Tsunami, Flood, Acid rains and Drought etc. Now peoples were awake and understand the important of environment for the existing of human life therefore started to work for save environment. Societies were involved themselves into the work regarding the safeguard of environment. Being the better half part of the society Women’s role into the protection of environment found deep rooted. Greek and Hindu Goddesses were animal as their ‘bahana’ which showed that woman playing great role in the protection of environment.

After the publication of Ester Boserup book “Women’s Role in Economic Development” in 1970 Women and their connections with the environment was came into focused. In early 1980’s policy makers and government of various countries given emphasised on the relations between environment and gender issues for the economic development. Natural resources and management of environmental issue had begun to change for the specific role of Women. According to the World Bank in 1991, Women were playing an essential role in management of natural resources, including soil, water, forest and energy and also have past and present knowledge regarding the natural world or environment around them.

Corresponding Author:
Ujjal Das
Research Scholar,
Mahapurusha Srimanta
Sankaradeva Viswavidyalaya
(MSSV), Nagaon, Assam,
India

In our society women are managing water, firewood for fuel, food and others item from the forest and Agricultural field in every family. The UN Earth Summit (Rio) in 1992, India's Chipko movement, Narmada Bachao Andolon, Kenya's Green Belt movement and others various women movement and the works of the environmentalist activist highlighted the roles of women for sustainable development. Women like Jane Goodall, Greta Thunberg, Malaika Vaz, Katherine Hayhoe, Julia Lorraine Hill, Rachel Carson, Vandana Shiva, Sunita Narraine, Sumaira Abdulali, Kinkari Devi, Medha Patkar, Menaka Gandhi and many more are playing a key role for the protection of environment. Women from the various Women's self-help group, Mahila Sammity, Professional's women cell, political parties' women wing and student organizations were also actively participating for the protection of environment as well as they working for create awareness among the people of the world with wide used of social media plate forms.

Women's role in protection of environmental protection

In various studies significantly shows that Women were also an important contributors in the field of environment protection and preservation. Women have a direct connection with her day to day activities to environment with their deep knowledge of it. Women engage in agricultural farming and collect water and firewood directly from nature mostly in developing countries of the world. Women were performs family and social obligations those are closely interlink with the environment. Because of this they know about the soil, plants, trees, water and others resources of nature; therefore they do not abuse them. Women were more closely associates with nature which makes a culture for conservation and preservation of environment for ensuring that the future generation should get their needs available from environment and also learn how to preserve nature and environment for their next generation. Protection of environment and its resources cannot be possible without the participation of women whether they are old, young and child in planning and to provide them proper training for the implementation and to promote values for the protection and conservation of environment.

Women were promoted environment protection as respect for next generations and supplier of the require needs. The role of women in protection of environment during the period of 1975-1985 had increased which is known as United Nations Decades for Women. Knowledge regarding environment and culture are convey to the future generations is the responsibility which perform by women in every community and society. Women are playing very important role in management of home, upbringing of children and taught consumptions culture to them such as stop wasting water, reduced consumption of electricity, reduced uses of sprays, perfume, plastics disposable materials, plastics container and proper use of detergent, saving fuel by reducing use of private vehicle etc. Also create awareness on energy saving practices, use of sustainable good, reduce the consumption of disposable goods, and management of waste from Factory, Agricultural fields and Households.

Dankelman and Davidson (1998) said that women are playing an important role into the management of their natural environment and its resources and take various mechanisms to deal with the different types of

environmental crisis such as calamities like Earthquake, Cyclone, Drought, Tsunami etc. There is no significant responses and initiative took from the government as a result women, men and children's are all facing problems like pollution in soil, water and air, poor services, human waste ill management, fumes from households fuel and also the consequences of soil erosion and flooding.

Throughout the human history women and environment are interconnected from the time of immemorial. Women have personified as powerful symbols of nature such like as Mother Earth, Earth Goddess, and Arthemis in the Greek mythology and Mother River "The Yellow River" in Chinese again in India each every God and Goddess have an attachment with the environment as Durga Devi rides Lion, Lord Ganesha rides Mouse, Lord Shiva rides Nandi (Ox), Laxmi Devi rides Owl, Swarasati Devi rides Goose and worshiping of People tree etc. Women were the protector and conservers of life, first guide and teachers of the next generation of communities.

According to UN Chronicle Journal the involvement of women into the agricultural activities become of cause of Breast Cancer due to uses of pesticide DDT and its derivative DDE. World Health Organization study showed that Women are exposed to pesticide is facing a higher risk in abortion. These kinds of health issues make women to feel more responsible regarding their surrounding environment.

Women were raised movement for the protection of environment by themselves and along with the men of the society. They were: -

Bishnoi Movement, 1700: The movement took place in Khejarli, Marwar region of Rajasthan when the Maharaj of that area ordered his soldier to cut down the trees of the region which were believed as sacred by the villager. Amrita Devi along with the other Bishnoi villager hugged the trees to protect and encourage others to protect the trees. 363 Bishnoi villagers were killed in this movement. Later the Bishnoi state was declared as a protected area.

Chipko Movement, 1973: The movement was led by Sundorlal Bahuguna, Gaura Devi, Sudhesha Devi, Bachini Devi, Chandni Prasad Bhatt and many others in Chamoli district and Tehri-Garhwal district of Uttarakhand to protect the trees on the Himalayan slopes from the axes of contractors of the forest. The women of Advani village tied the trees and they hugged the trees, hence it called the Chipko movement.

Silent Valley Movement, 1978: Silent valley is an evergreen tropical forest in the Palakkad district of Kerala. In the leadership of Sugutha Kumari along with others in order to protect the Silent valley from being destroyed by Hydroelectric power project of the Kerala State Electricity Board.

Jungle Bachao Andolon, 1982: This movement took place in Singbhum district of Bihar by the Tribal's started protest when the government decided to replace Sal forest with Teak. This protest also known as Greed Game Political Populism.

Appiko Movement, 1983: Appiko movement is the southern version of the Chipko movement. The Appiko

movement was locally known as Appiko Chaluvali. The local people embraced the trees against the contractors.

Narmada Bachao Andolon, 1985: This is organized by the farmers, environmentalists and human right activists protest against the Sardar Sarovar Dam in Gujrat across the Narmada river which flows thorough the Gujrat, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. To provides irrigations and electricity of above mentioned states in the cause of environment degradation. Medha Patkar and Babu Amte were the main leaders of the movement.

Green Belt Movement, 1977: The movement was initiated to stop Kenya's rapidly diminishing forest resources. It was the one of the biggest women movement for the protection of environment to bring environmental restoration along with society's economic growth and to empower rural women through environmental preservation. The movement led by Noble Prize Winner Wangari Maathai on the day of world environment day on 5th June 1977 when very few women planted seven trees in Wangari Maathai's backyard, till 2005 there are 30 million trees had been planted by its participants in private lands.

Leagal provision on environmental protection in India

The Constitution of India provides equal rights to both Men and Women and both are equal before law. In the constitution of India has a specific reference have made for an environmental protection and preservation. In the 42nd Amendment Act of 1976 of the Indian constitution have made a fundamental duty to protect and improve of the natural environment.

According to Article 51(a) provides that it shall be the duty of every citizen of India to protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers and wild life and have compassion for living creatures.

According to the Article 21of constitution of India guaranteed the right to life, a life of dignity, to disease and infection control. There are also numbers of Directive Principles which given emphasized for protection of environment.

There are certain special legislations are also made for the protection of environment, such as follows

- a. The Indian Forest Act, 1927.
- b. The Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.
- c. The Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) act, 1974.
- d. The Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 and Comprehensive Legislation.
- e. The Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981.
- f. The Environmental Protection Act, 1986.

Women have not satisfied with the various Mass Movements, Strikes, and Bandh for the Protection of Environment. They also moved to the court for the Justice to protect the nature and environment. In Krishna Gopal Vs State of Madhya Pradesh Cr.L.J pp. 396, 1986 where Mrs. Sarla Tripathi filed a complaint with the DM, Indoor against Glucose Saline factory for the accused of making Public Nuisance in the residential area.

Kinkari Devi Vs State of Himachal Pradesh, AIR, HP-4, 1988 in this case the petition was filed against the Excavation of Lime Stones in Sirmour district of Himachal

Pradesh.

Recommendations

- a. Women are closely connected with the environment, if ensured that each women of the society have the opportunity to learn about the environmental important and how to protect and improves their surrounding for future generations.
- b. By creating awareness regarding the degradation and its impact among the women as well as the men of the communities.
- c. Now a day almost all women whether in rural or in a urban area they have their various socio-economic groups, if encourage them to plant commercial trees in different occasion and make them understand that it will be benefited for them.
- d. Government can also increase the women participation into the protection and preservation of environment by providing some aid assistants.
- e. By making a culture of planting trees in each and every family and societal occasion etc.
- f. Conducting awareness program in Schools, College, and University and also in village area as well as urban areas.
- g. By giving equal status to women of the society will increase the women participation in the field of protection of environment.
- h. Engagement of more women in forest department and other environmental government agencies.
- i. Provides stricter legal provision can also reduced environmental degradation and increase women involvement into protection of surrounding natural resources and environment.
- j. Encourage the communities to use the available alternates for their fuel instead of cutting down the forest areas.

Conclusion

A woman role into the protection of environment is has been noticed very remarkable since Ancient times. Women are always closely connected with the surrounding nature; they are the manager of the resources in all the families of the communities and directly collect resources for the household from the nature. Such as water, firewood and several items etc. Women were playing key role in protection of environment from the time unmemorable. Women are more active in the field of environment protection than men because they are do household and societal work more connectively with the environment. They maintain and deal with the entire family and its various issues when men are busy in acquiring bread for the family. Women in national or international level working for the betterment of environment by different movements, strikes, protest etc. Women were led Chipko movement, Bishnoi movement, Green Belt movement and many more. Women environmentalist activist like Greta Thunberg, Jane Goodall, Medha Patkar, Kinkari Devi, Vandhana Shiva and many more are working for the protection of environment. Throughout the above discussion it has found that women were working whole heartedly for protect and improves the environment, this will be become more active and fruitful when other parts of the society stand with the women by holding hand in hand.

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