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“Role of Women in Environmental Protection”

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Abstract:-

Women's role as environmental protectors is gaining recognition in the struggle to preserve the sustainability of the environment. Their contribution is evident in their participation in the Indian National Movement and continues in policies of the Government of India and other Indian organizations during independent times. Women contribute to environmental protection both directly in preserving natural resources and indirectly through supporting services in society. Throughout history, women have been custodians of nature, cultivating and utilizing natural products, including fibers, herbs, plants, fruits, berries, vegetables, and fodder, for domestic use. Early environmentalists such as Anaconda Cooley, from British Guiana, and Greta Thunberg continue to promote awareness. Biodiversity symbolizes women's commitment toward nature and its protection. The conservation of nature and environment now occupies the highest rank of priority in public consciousness. Nature means the natural world as a whole, including plants, animals, the landscape, and other features and products of the earth, as opposed to human creations. Women contribute to environmental protection by creating awareness through education, eco-schools, green clubs, eco-groups, non-governmental organizations, campaigns, and support services in the social order. In recent years, societal developments have made women custodians not only of streams and tanks but also of air, water, earth, and vegetation. The increasing participation of women in saving earth's resources indicates the significance of their contribution.

Keywords: *Environmental Protection, Environmental Degredation, Environmental Management, Policy, Climate change, Diversity*

1.Introduction

Women are custodians of natural resources such as water, fuel and fodder for domestic use, and are directly linked to the environment through both their productive and reproductive roles. The domestic role of women is carried out within and around home in the village environment. As women are closely linked to natural resources, they are directly affected by environmental degradation. They have traditionally been involved in caring for the environment and continue to be so throughout the world. It is women who conserve the biodiversity of the planet. It is the women of Earth who, in reality, have always been interested in having a clean, healthy and stable environment.

Women's protection of environment and community is a powerful and persistent theme, recurring again and again throughout history. Women have been the pioneers of the present phase of the ecological movement. Women leaders have expressed the restless anxieties of a world ahead that is losing its natural riches, whether through the lavish and ruthless plundering of raw materials, through planetary poisoning or the destruction of the balance of nature. This is a huge field of questions and demands that feminists are working with. The women's participation in environmental protection may involve: management and administration, utilization of natural resources, control over pollution, generation of awareness and education, planning and decision-making, and development of schemes for environmental management and operation. Women's leadership in environment can also be seen both in the national and international context. In fact, it was women who first organized on local, neighbourhood or community lines and struggled for basic ecological protection, for their rivers and air and water purity. The successful implementation of the role of women in environment depends not only on women themselves and the nature of the movement they adopt, but also on the attitude of government.

2.Historical Perspectives on Women's Role in Environmental Movements:-

The question of the woman's role as a guardian of environment is as old as Man himself. Women are a source of unlimited inspiration in human lives, and women themselves are themselves inspired in different spheres of life. Women, on the one hand are a symbol of nature "giving birth and nurturing", while, on the other are also a symbol of sacrifice and devotion for developing a clean and green environment. Women have worked constructively not only for the society, but also for environment protection. There is an element of irrational magical sentiments in the very beautiful story of the

daughters of Daksha. Even in environmental pollution women have played a constructive role. Early history of pollution makes mention of the daughters of Rishi Daksha had become upset by the atrocities practised by the wildlife, so they invoked King Manu who ruled the earth at that time. The King dealt severely with the wildlife so that the latter never indulged in such mischief ever again.

Women have always worked for the betterment of the environment in their communities and have even gathered from different villages to save the Environment. Mata Amrita Devi and other women of the Bishno community sacrificed their lives in protecting trees in Rajasthan. Also, environmentalist Joan Carling has argued that protecting the environment means protecting indigenous women's rights too. As custodians of sustainable use of natural resources these women are highly vulnerable to the impact of environmental changes. Analysing women's role in creating an awareness about the environment and the participation of women in a constructive movement against environmental pollution through the ages would be an interesting study.



3. Women as Custodians of Natural Resources:-

Women – the wives, the mothers, the sisters and the daughters – are often the primary conservers of households, families and societies across centuries and centuries. Watersheds and forests are more than protected areas or communally managed resources for them. Where systems survive largely unchanged over many years and where change brings anxieties and tensions for the countryside people, women have often emerged as the protectors of these systems, as signified by the various names attributed to them – Bharat Mata, Desh ki Rakshaks, desh ki devi, Gram Devi and many more. Women have played a leading role in the ecological movements of India. Preliminary research shows that these movements have been led and organised largely by women, and so have many others that may not fall strictly within the ecological category yet have at their core the mitigation of natural resource degradation by

participation in struggle and activism – the Chipko Andolan, the Tehri Dam and the Lonavla Struggle against quarrying being a few.

Women and Natural Resources Women play a leading role in utilisation and management of natural resources at household level. They have a distinct and intimate relationship with it, crossing both spatial and time dimensions. Their practical ecological knowledge, some of it accumulated over generations and orally transmitted, some of it generated through their daily close contact with the natural resources, is extraordinary and invaluable. Not surprisingly, women tend to be the experimentalists, both in agriculture and industry. It needs to be emphasised that women's activities and interest in the natural resources are not unaffected by socio-economic relations and structure; it is shaped and moulded by them.

4. Women in Environmental Policy and Leadership

Women play a vital role in environmental protection. Environmental degradation is a multidimensional problem. Because of their involvement in natural resource management and the special bond they share with the environment, women have always been the custodians of nature and natural resources. They emphasize the protection of natural resources for the fulfillment of the needs of the future generations because they have to be the alone responsible for the future of the next generations and their running household maintenance. Historical perspectives on women's role in environmental movements, including the participation of women in environmental policy and leadership, show that women by their education, knowledge, and leadership abilities help in conservation, restoration, protection, and development of the environment. These internationally recognized women leaders have played a pioneering role in promoting gender-equitable decision-making in Canada, the United States, Norway, and Switzerland.

Women have long been known as the practical environment-protecting group. The modern environmental movement, however, began in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, during the period of Industrial Revolution and Urbanization. The first phase of urbanization produced increasing concentrations of people in cities in which the physical setting was unsuited for the high number of people, inadequate sanitary conditions, air pollution caused by horse-drawn transportation of goods, and overcrowding of people and animals. All these factors proved to be a threat for the population itself. At that time, the help of educated middle-class women was sought through women's movement. The work of women such as Mary H. Kingsley and Alice

Cunningham in protecting the environment, or how they combined gender identity with environmental causes, is noted specially.



5. Grassroots Activism and Community Mobilization

Grassroots activism and community mobilization guide the daily lives of societies by educating people to be responsible in their lifestyles and social interactions. Women have addressed environmental problems as leaders in the battles for social progress during the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries, serving as pioneers of the struggle beyond national and racial boundaries. Participation by women is vital to any community around the world, as their nurturing and protective nature enriches society. The role of women in the environment has always been closely connected with their role in the family. It is difficult to separate links between women as housewives and women as Socialist feminists.

Women are naturally protecting agents for the environment in terms of their upbringing, family, and the society in which they live. Since time immemorial, nature has bestowed women with keen observation and analytical powers, which help them to lead life with thoughtful and logical reasoning, particularly regarding the conservation of resources. Both men and women share equal responsibility in protecting and promoting the environment. According to the World Commission on Environment and Development, women are assumed to be the principal protectors of the natural environment. Despite this, though outnumbering men in various environmental campaigns, women are frequently labeled as passive participants acting under male supervision, a notion that cannot always be substantiated.

6. Women, Environmental Education, and Awareness

Women have been playing an important role in creating awareness about environmental degradation. They have been keen observers and practical learners of nature's mysteries. They know for how long it takes for a plant to grow, at what stage a crop

becomes ready for harvesting, what are the skills to be used to make the plant grow in the best way and time, how rain affects the crops, and how winds affect the plants. They know the importance of water, trees, fields, hills, and mountains. They respect and have love for nature and want to keep its environment functional and productive. Women are the source of Ecological knowledge. They convey this message to the family and especially to the children right from their birth through their words, behavior, and actions. They are the makers of values and also the supporters.

Women have an important role in the progression of environmental movements, as their involvement in the process is not new. Women have had extensive contacts with nature and are deeply involved in its use and protection, especially those belonging to backward classes or weaker sections of society and rural areas. They have always been natural protectors and users of the environment. The responsibilities for survival have always rested with them, creating a dynamic relationship with their environment. Women gather fuel, extract water from a well, cultivate land, and live close to the soil with a deep dependence on ecological processes.

7.Challenges and Barriers to Women's Participation

Women play a major role in conservation of environment and natural resources, as they are the primary users and managers of natural resources. But they have traditionally been assigned a dual role and continue to be assigned the double burden of both productive and reproductive activities. They provide their contribution towards economic development but are often discriminated against in terms of status, power, and privileges. They often live in an invisible world of exploitation, deprivation, and denial. They do not participate equally in the decision-making process in the field of environment and natural resources management, even though the impact of environmental degradation affects them most severely. Their participation is crucial in any developmental measure as well as environmental management and planning.

Women have faced social and cultural barriers in the patriarchal society of India and in most of the world. Although they have been exploiting natural resource since ages with the least damage, their role and participation in managing and protecting environment has still not been recognized fully. Women should be involved at all levels of decision-making. They are the most powerful reshapers of nature. Their creativity, foresightedness, wisdom, patience, and regularity are necessary to manage living and non-living resources. However, the experience of women's participation in environment management at grassroots level has been quite successful as they are well aware about the importance and condition of the natural resource.

8. Global Frameworks and Gender-Responsive Environmental Policies

Environmental problems are social problems in the sense that women and men are affected differently. Women tend to suffer the most. Explanations why women play a key role in working on environmental issues have been sought in the literature on women and development. Women are well placed to understand the connections between population, biological diversity, reproductive health, and natural resource management. Women carry a wealth of ecological and biological knowledge and, in their roles as cultivators and guardians of agricultural biodiversity, they act as seed keepers, herbalists, and providers of food and health care. They are conservers and managers of both the natural environment and their family well-being. Historical Perspectives on Women's Role in Environmental Movements Mary Wollstonecraft and Caroline Merchant were early environmental feminists. Mary Wollstonecraft (1759–1797) laid bare the economic underpinnings of the deprivation of women in Britain. Caroline Merchant's research parallels Karl Marx's analyses of capitalism and its ecologically destructive consequences but with a different and gender-specific focus.

Women have significant knowledge about ecosystems and their species because of their roles in subsistence economies. Women play an important part in the generation of indigenous knowledge because of their responsibilities in seed production and collection of subsistence produce and wild plants. They have specialized knowledge of the plants they use for household consumption or for fodder. The survival of rural communities and their food security depends heavily on women's intimate understanding of the physical environment. Women safeguard life, acquiring ecological knowledge about soil fertility, seed varieties, natural resources, fuel, fodder, and water. Their use and conservation of these resources reflect a finely balanced relationship achieved over many years.



9. Empowering Women for a Greener Future

Women play a crucial role in conserving the environment through their participation in policy formulation, education, and community organization. In ordinary life, women act as custodians of nature, adept at utilizing natural resources to meet the needs of their families and communities. Surveying the spectrum of women's environmental contributions naturally leads to an examination of the various global frameworks designed to empower them.

International agreements and frameworks recognize that women are disproportionately vulnerable to climate change and must be protected from its adverse effects. By mitigating environmental degradation, such measures aim to promote gender equality, aligning with the objectives of the Beijing Platform for Action and the agenda of the Twenty-Third Special Session of the General Assembly. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Kyoto Protocol, Agenda 21 and its Program for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21, and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation all emphasize the need for climate policies, action plans on climate change, and local initiatives to be gender responsive and supportive of the role of women.

10. Conclusion

Role of women in environmental protection has been a major focus among researchers and policy makers in recent times. Women have an unparalleled role in management of domestic, village and community environment. As a custodian of primary needs of her family she utilizes natural resources in a sustainable and judicious way. She remains in touch with environment always and suffers much when environment is polluted. The knowledge of important role of women in environmental protection has deep roots in Indian culture. Realization of the importance of women's role in development must be reflected in the control over resources, especially land, water, education, information, and employment. The role of educated women in the planning of environmental management and protection is very significant.

All countries of the world are suffering from environmental problems and the role of women in the protection of environment is very important because it is women who utilize the natural resources such as water, fuel, fodder and food for her family needs. Her deep awareness comes from contact with the environment; yet women in most societies are defined as economic inferior and have little or no control over resources and little or no responsibility in environmental decisions. In spite of their numerous responsibilities, women suffer many disadvantages in comparison with men. This is

because women still remain disadvantaged and discriminated against, denied education, employment, command over resources and power to change.

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