



WOMEN: FROM HOMEMAKERS TO CHANGEMAKERS

* *Dr. Elvina Nevil Pereira,*

* *Assistant Professor, St. Xavier's Institute of Education, Autonomous*

Abstract:

This paper highlights how the women especially in India from ancient times were the real managers of environment conservation and protection. The paper investigates the journey of women as an agent of protecting the environment thus the trailblazers. Women who were part of the early movements in the area of environment protection and preservation in spite of not being so educated or probably illiterate but still did not give up their mission and made a difference in society by their contribution. In 21st Century where the world is confronted with very serious environmental issues women are taking lead through their NGOs and Startups to apply innovative solutions to tackle various environmental issue and to bring sustainable development.

Copyright © 2023 The Author(s): This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC 4.0) which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium for non-commercial Use Provided the Original Author and Source Are Credited.

INTRODUCTION:

“We are either going to have a future where women lead the way to make peace with the Earth or we are not going to have a human future at all.” —**Vandana Shiva**

The relationship between the environment and women is dated back since ancient times as the Archaeological evidences show that agriculture first began about 11,000 years ago and women are credited to have started cultivation. This bond that women share with the environment is crucial in modern times as women are acting as a vibrant agent in conservation and preservation of mother earth.

Various evidences show that in present times women are not just actively involved in contributing through the sustainable eco practices but are also increasingly leading various practices and actions in the area of sustainable environmental practices. Thus, we can say in major way women are making a

mark and difference through simple eco-friendly act to lead quality life.

Women's participation in environmental conservation and preservation has increased and has become more noticeable. In India it is observed that more women activist as well as common ordinary women are coming forward and either leading the environmental movements or becoming an active member in their own capacity to become an agent of social change.

The various roles played by women in balanced sustainable development is rapidly evolving and the bond between the women and nature is becoming stronger. The women are proving to be the responsible managers of natural resources and creating awareness about how being sensitive towards mother earth is the need of the hour. Thus, we can say women in modern times display high environmental consciousness.



History speaks in volumes about how women have the natural quality as caretakers and in the issue of environmental degradation they are proving to be the best caretakers of not just at their family level but of environment at regional, national and international level.

THE TRAILBLAZERS:

As humans we are confronting many emerging conflicts with the environment. These conflicts are very seriously impacting the survival of humans. The situation has become more challenging today as the impact is seen in various areas and specially in human health issues this is largely due to imbalance or mismanagement of natural resources. Involvement of women in this situation is ray of hope where the women are proving to be an agent who are trying to bridge the gap and find solutions to save our common home earth!

In India where patriarchy is deeply-rooted in every sphere of life it is not easy for women to come out and be the part of the struggle to save environment. But in many movements at present women are displaying solidarity and playing a pivotal role in both managing and leading various movements inspite of repeated attempt to held them back. In these challenging times we see many women are at the forefront and doing an extraordinary contribution to save the degradation of the environment which is happening under the name of development.

India is in many ways pioneers when it comes to participation of women in the environmental movements. When we look at the contribution of women who were the torch bearers in India we come across some of the noteworthy movements.

Kehjali Movement which is also known as Bishnoi Movement in Rajashthan led by Amrita Devi and her

three young daughters who led down their lives to protect the sacred trees. This movement is considered as the first environmental movement in India where women were the leaders. Thus, paving a way for women to become the agents of conservation of nature.

Chipko Movement – Embracing trees and Saving Forest which is a significant movement that shows the remarkable involvement of women in environmental movement is one such movement which displayed the organised mobilization of women to protect the nature-forests. The movement became successful because of the collective women power though the pioneers were men but women acted as a strong supportive pillar of the surge. Women participated in this movement aggressively because they were the ones who bear the brunt directly of the slow degradation of region. These women strongly believed that the bond that they share with nature should be nurtured for the survival of the humans. As one scholar, Shobita Jain puts it – “The Chipko Movement can indeed be considered an important success story in the fight to secure women’s rights, in the process of local community development through forestry and in environmental protection.”

Appiko Movement is another environmental movement in India where women were at the forefront to protect the forest and regeneration of trees. Also, through this movement women gave a very strong message that humans need to be mindful and sensitive while utilizing forest wealth. Women created awareness about how commercial and industrial interest if not handle with concern for the nature can pose as a harmful ecological danger for the mankind. This movement was revolutionary by



all means.

Silent Valley Movement which was led by Malayalam Poet and Environmentalist Sugatha Kumari for the conservation of biodiversity resulted into calling off the silent valley hydroelectric project and declaring Silent Valley as National Park.

Narmada Bachao Andolan which was organized under the leadership of Medha Patkar. This movement was a Gandhian way of protest that is Satyagraha- non-violence. The impact of movement was seen when the World Bank which was a funding body for the Sardar Sarovar Dam Project withdraw the project.

In India when we look at all these environmental movements, we observe that majority of these women who took part in these revolutionary movement were ordinary rural and probably illiterate women who not only had to struggle with the patriarchal society but also fight for the cause. They are all in true sense were and are the unsung heroes of the larger environmental movements that are now making a mark in different regions, countries of the world.

TAKING THE LEGACY FORWARD THROUGH INNOVATIONS:

India has moved ahead with time. The journey started with environment movements led by women at present in 21st Century have reached to women led NGOs and Startups in various aspects in the area of environment through innovations and initiatives. As we face the drastic environmental issues in 21st Century we now have reached the stage where we need not just collective contribution from women through various movements but also serious efforts at individual levels. In this scenario too women are taking initiatives through establishing NGOs and

Startups and working towards making a difference by changing habits of people which are encouraging more eco-friendly solutions.

Some of the torch bearers we can name are: Perna Prasad, who founded Ecoplore India's platform to book Eco Hotels and experiences. Ashwini Gaikar, who founded Sunshine Elements, a luxury, hand-crafted bath and body line that supports sustainable living and helps empower rural women. Social Entrepreneur Nupur Agarwal founded Evolve Foundation to create smart sustainable villages and Kisan Window to promote the concept of fair trade without middleman. The village adopted by her is thriving economically and culturally where she started cottage industry to produce eco-friendly plantable stationary products. She is also a mentor to the Atal Innovation Mission, the Government of India's flagship initiative to promote a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship and a changemaker at Global Action on Poverty. Aparna Vinod the founder of Igloopupa an online eco-friendly accommodation booking platform which spreads environmental consciousness. Aditi Balbir an entrepreneur with V Resorts which is empowering local communities in 20 Indian states. Pratima Sinha and Somya Suresh co-founders of Nurture India are promoting eco-conscious homeware brands through traditional Indian handicrafts. These torch bearers are just few who are representing thousands of women activist across the globe who going out of their comfort zone to make a difference in modern world which is more inclined towards luxurious lifestyle.

Rachel Carson is known as the mother of environmental movements because of the questions she raised in her book 'Silent Spring' in the year



1962 where she talked about the consequences of using chemical pesticides. Globally, many environments related protests have emerged where the women of different parts of the world are fighting for the various environmental issues and thus saving nature from the destruction. Around the world, women are projecting themselves as stewards, innovators and solution- multipliers who are effortlessly working for the achievement of sustainable development goals. Having said that, when we try to figure out where are women in decision making positions with regard to environment the data from International Union for Conservation of Nature indicates in 2020 there is an incremental change where women held 15% of top jobs as ministers of environmental sectors. But still, this is not enough and the world needs to step up progress as it is crucial to recognise the contribution of women and give them the deserving platform and support.

CONCLUSION:

Globally History witnessed the role played by women as an integral part of the conservation and protection of the environment. All these movements or initiatives by women in the area of environment also show that women fought peacefully but they did not give up because they were sure that the future of humans is tied with the nature. All these women came forward as soldiers and each passing day at present, they are growing in strength and becoming more sensitive thus making a mark in history by their act. Mostly women are often associated with managing natural resources, biodiversity and ecosystems, their experiences and perspectives are essential to sustainable development policymaking and actions at every level, for a healthy planet for

generations to come. To conclude in the words of World Bank, 1991, 'Women play an essential role in the management of natural resources including soil, water, forests and energy and often has a profound traditional and contemporary knowledge of the natural world among them'

REFERENCES:

- Global Women's Issues: Women in the World Today, Extended Version by Bureau of International Information Program Chapter 11: Women and the Environment. <https://opentextbc.ca/womenintheworld/chapter/chapter-11-women-and-the-environment/>
- Women and Environment with Special Reference to India: An Assessment by Bidisha Borah Guwahati University European Journal of Molecular & Clinical Medicine ISSN 2515-8260 Volume 7, Issue 11, 2020 https://ejmcm.com/article_4717_c290efe48df7534e4b9eb3720453154a.pdf
- Embracing Trees, Saving Forests-Women and the Chipko Movement in India, 21st June, 2013 <https://www.soroptimistinternational.org/embracing-trees-saving-forests-women-and-the-chipko-movement-in-india/><https://www.soroptimistinternational.org/embracing-trees-saving-forests-women-and-the-chipko-movement-in-india/>
- The Role of Women in the Conservation of Environment with Special Reference to Assam Authors Rodali Mohan and Pooja Sharma Journal of Positive School Psychology 2022, Vol. 6, No. 3, 5849-5855 <https://journalppw.com/>
- Role Of Women In Environmental Movement In India Upama Saikia Ilkogretim Online -

Elementary Education Online, 2021; Vol 20
(Issue 6): pp. 2473-2478 <http://ilkogretim-online.org>
doi:
10.17051/ilkonline.2021.06.228
<https://www.ilkogretim-online.org/fulltext/218-1648493093.pdf>

Meet 6 women entrepreneurs offering eco-friendly solutions for a greener world By Tenzin Norzom June 06, 2020, Updated on : Thu Apr 08 2021 14:46:50 GMT+0530
<https://yourstory.com/herstory/2020/06/women-entrepreneurs-eco-friendly-startup>

Cite This Article:

****Dr. Elvina Nevil Pereira (2023). Women – From Homemakers to Changemakers, Educreator Research Journal, Volume–X, Issue– II, March –April 2023, 7-11.***