

Women and Environment: An Ecofeminist View

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ABSTRACT

Women are the milestones of our society, though they work in every sphere of life. No one can be denied their contribution to the family. Our society makes a borderline for them due to gender bias. Women depend on the environment for their household work, because of which they have a deep attachment to nature. They collect more natural resources than men. The loss of the environment directly impacts women. This paper tries to understand the relationship between women and the environment.

Key Words: Women, Environment, Ecofeminism

INTRODUCTION

Conservation of the environment depends on women. Global research has reported that there is a link between gender equality and environmental issues. The main reason behind this issue is to show the role of women in the development of balanced environmental sustainability. For example, in India, women are involved with the environment for their household purposes or for their love and care for nature.

Women have been considered the caretakers of the environment since past periods. They had played an important role in caring for environmental issues. Now the question may arise, 'how can the relationship of women and nature evolve?' This question may be answered in various types, i.e., 1) women have the skills to manage natural resources, 2) they have a tenderness towards nature, 3) women also have a better ecological consciousness than men.

METHODOLOGY

The information in this paper is collected through the secondary sources of data, i.e. articles, journals, the internet, etc.

Objectives of this paper:

1. To know the relationship between women and the environment
2. To know about ecofeminist issues

Relation Between Women And The Environment

It was seen from the past eras that women have a special relationship with nature. It was in an attempt to justify women's role and to give cultural and political weight to International Calls to address gender concerns (Leach, 2007). Some scholars argued that women's bodies as productive in the same way as nature (Mies, 1986 and Leach, 2007). Women's motherly character in traditional society was compared to the image of a 'nurturing earth', which implies that 'constraint for exploitation of nature' (Shiva, 1988).

Ecofeminists also argue that women and nature are equally tortured by patriarchal institutions (Leach, 2007). The succession of the organismic theory, which sees the earth as a nurturing female at the centre of the universe (Feminine Principle) by the scientific revolution, which is said to be the domination of women by

men (Shiva,1988). It has also marked colonialism and imperialism, which are discussed as bearing a Western theme and rationality, that 'does violence' to women and nature. It undermined the pre-existing conceptions, which were grounded in the feminine principle (Shiva,1988 and Leach 2007).

Ecofeminist Issues

The close and intimate relation between women and nature has led to the creation of ecofeminist theory. It makes a connection between ecological ethics and feminism, which seeks to explore the connection between environmental degradation and sexist oppression. Women have a close relation with their local environment by collecting firewood in the forest, water and metal. For which women, and children, and specially marginalized sections are the main victims of many natural disasters.

When a conflict arises between natural resources and people's rights to survive, then the ecological movements have started. In the regions of the Indian subcontinent, most of the natural resources are being utilised by the large majority of people. Women are involved in many environmental movements such as Chipko Movements, Green Belt Movements, Narmada Bachao Andolan, Appiko Movement, Silent Valley Movement etc.

Chipko Movements

One of the first ecofeminist movements is the Chipko Movements (women tree-huggers in India). This 'Chipko' comes from the Hindi word 'Chipac' means 'to stick'. The movement was an act of resistance against the State Governments permission given to a corporation for commercial purpose. Women, who are depending on forest, specially the village women was clutching trees to prevent their feelings. All women are against deforestation and they came forward to save the trees.

It has started when Maharaja of Jodhpur wanted to build a new palace in Rajasthan, which is India's Himalayan foot hills. When axe men were cutting the trees, Martyr Amrita Devi hugged one of the trees.

Green Belt Movements

Another movement is the green belt movement, which is also a big ecofeminist movement. Nobel Prize winner Wangari Maathai founded this movement on World Environment Day in June 1977. This movement aims to bring environmental remodelling along with society's economic growth. This also focused on restoration of Kenya's deforestation and empowering rural women through environmental preservation with specific emphasis on planting.

Narmada Bachao Andolan

This andolan which has started in 1955 in areas around Narmada River. The river is the witness of that struggle, which using the non-violent method of Gandhi. The most viral slogan of this movement was 'Nari Shakti ka Samman'. All women at that time were ready to sacrifice their life for the sake of river and to say 'NO' for the construction of Dam

Appiko Movement

The Appiko movement, is started in Karnataka in the year1983. This was a movement, which launched to oppose the governmental policy for using the forest for industrial development. In this movement, many women and children, hugged the trees. In this movement, Mahila Mandal has played an effective role including Adivasi women.

Silent Valley Movement

In 1976 at Southern end of Western Ghats in Kerala, Silent Vally is one of the important biodiversity hotspots. This silent valley movement was led by Sugatha Kumari. This agitation was against the government decision to construct dam for hydroelectric power in silent valley forest. The active role played by women and different protests are the cause of the declaration of forest as a National Park.

CONCLUSION

If we think about our natural resources, than forest is considered as one of the most useable resource and we have to preserve and conserve them. Women are playing a very important role in its protection. The destruction of the environment mostly affects women because they are mostly attached to the environment. Now in the modern era, the role of women has been seen in every field of life, so their role in ecological management must be recognised.

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