

RURAL WOMEN AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

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Abstract:

The lives of women have been linked to the environment of each region. Women are more closely associated with environment. Their work is important in terms of environmental sustainability. They are constantly working on the health and well-being of everyone in the family. The health of others is in her hands. On the whole, human life in that region provides resources from the environment while making a living. There are many businesses running but not only business but daily life is connected to the environment. Air, water, seasons, food, minerals, clothing, homes, fuel, health, business, etc. In all such cases, women's lives are related to the environment. Women have direct interaction with environmental resources like fuel, food and fodder, forest, water and land in rural areas. A lot of studies on women and environment have described that women is very close to nature and they are significant agents in natural resource management and they are major contributors to environmental rehabilitation and conservation. Women are having base and skills for better environmental resource management. Rural women are key players in achieving the economic, environmental and social changes required for sustainable environmental development. There is a large number of women farmers and women laborers all over the world. Their empowerment is necessary not only for the individual but also for the welfare of the family and the rural community.

The present paper looks into the role of women in environmental sustainability in rural area. It is also intended to assess the relation between rural women in agriculture and environmental sustainability. The study is mainly a theoretical and analytical. The relevant material is collected from the secondary sources. In rural areas, women are more closely linked to the environment. They care about the environment as much as they care about the family. Women can play an important role in protecting the environmental sustainability.

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Introduction:

Rural women are key players in achieving the economic, environmental and social changes required for sustainable environmental development. But financial supply, health care, limited access to education are the biggest challenges they face. There is a large number of women farmers and women labourers all over the world. Their empowerment is necessary not only for the individual but also for the welfare of the family and the rural community.

UN supports the leadership and participation of rural women in shaping laws, strategies, policies and programs on all issues that affect their lives, including improved food and nutrition security, and better rural livelihoods. Training equips them with skills to pursue new livelihoods and adapt technology to their needs. Different types of training build skills for women to adapt to new livelihoods and technology according to their needs

According to Viederman (1996), 'Sustainability is a community's control and prudent use of all forms of capital to

ensure, to the degree possible, the present and future generations can obtain a high degree of economic security and achieve democracy while maintaining the integrity of the ecological system upon which all life and production depends'

The resources of the region are developing according to the high human quality. The overall progress of human life is achieved through the development of resources. People who are connected to the real nature use the elements of the environment. Resource development depends on their actions and thoughts. The actual use of resources is related to the primary business in the environment. Rural areas are closer to environmental resources than urban areas. Most of the primary businesses are run in rural areas. For example agriculture, poultry farming, dairy farming, fish production, logging and mining etc.

Objectives of this study:

1. To study the role of women in environmental sustainability in rural area.
2. To identify the relation between the women work participation and sustainable agriculture.
3. To suggest the measures about sustainable agricultural development in rural area.

Data and Methodology:

The present research study is mainly a theoretical and analytical. With this in view the method of using secondary data consisting of census of India, reports, books, journals, libraries, etc. have been used. The relevant material is collected from the secondary sources. Materials and information are collected by legal sources like books on Environment, Women and Agriculture. Materials are also collected from electronic media. From the collected material and information, research proposes to critically analyse the topic of the study and tries to reach the aspects of the study.

Environmental Sustainability:

Environment means the natural world, which is the land, air and water in which people, animals and plants live. Environment I defined as sum total of all living and non-living things and their influence in human life. Environment provide us the resources to survive. It help to sustain our life with providing the genetic and biodiversity. We use the environmental things for enhance the quality of life.

The rapid growth population in world has resulted in increased farming and manufacturing, energy uses and deforestation. So many resources are on the way of depletion. Environment degradation is occurs in some last decades. The environment has been deteriorating in last few decades. Excessive use resource will lead to environmental degradation in the future. Many problems like ecological degradation, pollutions, loss of energy resources, climate change will have to be faced. This requires attention to environmental sustainability.

Sustainability is the ability to continue a defined behaviour indefinitely. Sustainability is described by Herman Daly, one of the early pioneers of ecological sustainability, He connected relation of sustainability with renewable resources, sustainable waste generation and non-renewable resources. Environmental sustainability is the rates of renewable resource harvest, pollution creation and non-renewable resource depletion that can be continued indefinitely.

Women and Environment:

Women have direct interaction with environmental resources like fuel, food and fodder, forest, water and land in rural areas. About 70% of Indian population live and it directly dependent upon natural resources. A lot of studies on women and environment have described that women is very close to nature and they are significant agents in natural resource management and they are major contributors to environmental rehabilitation and conservation. Women are having base and skills for better environmental resource management. They have sensitiveness towards environment and high ecological consciousness also. According to the World Bank in 1991, "Women play an essential role in the management of natural resources, including soil, water, forests and energy... and often have a

Profound traditional and contemporary knowledge of the natural world around them"

Role of Rural Women in Environmental Sustainability:

The environmentalists work for better environment for today and future. They give more value to ecological balance rather than greedy economic development. The role of women in use of environmental resources is very responsible. They are also careful for using these resources to satisfy the basic needs of their families. Before 19th century, it was considered that women have no role in environmental conservation and promotion, as well as they were avoided in all major sphere of socio-cultural life.

After spreading awareness about their rights and duties and taking knowledge of their surrounding they consciously tried to raise voice against environment degradation. The origin of the environment protection movement in India dates back to Kehjrali movement. And gain energy through Chipko movement, Save Silent Valley movement, Appiko movement and Narmada Bachao Andolan and other trend in the environmental protection movements in India. All movements emphasizes the environmental conservation. The most participants are women, Adivasi, and poor people. 'Women and environment are closely bounded and the intimate relation between women and nature led to the emergence of theory of ecofeminism, which is a field bridging ecological ethics and feminism that seeks to explore the conceptual connections between environmental degradation and sexist oppression' (Warren 1994).

Most of the rural livelihoods depends upon land, water, vegetation and animals based occupation i.e. farming, animal husbandry, fisheries, poultries and forestry. There is essential to conserve the ecosystems because the population pressures are increased on these environmental elements. The population supporting capacity of major ecosystem has been exceeded. Women play a vital role in managing natural resources on family and community levels and are most affected by environmental degradation.

Race and generations have been sustained by the women. They have been making a great contribution to the society and nation building. Women have knowledge and skills in environmental resource management and ability to work together. They have capacity to care the environment and good optimizer to manage the household with limited resources.

Rural Women and Agriculture:

India's climate is tropical and monsoon type. The whole of Indian agriculture depends on it. Sometimes heavy rains and floods occur in India and sometimes there are droughts and droughts. June to September is the monsoon period. Monsoon change has a major impact on agriculture. Global climate change has recently had a major impact on agriculture. The climatic condition affects the rural area that is highly sustain with the agricultural production.

Based on 2011 World Bank data, only 17.5% of India's GDP is accounted for by agricultural production. It is a way of life for majority in the country mostly an estimation of 72% of the 1.1 billion people who live in rural India and half of this population occupied the female population. In rural India, 84% women are depend upon agriculture for their livelihood. Women are engaged in agricultural sector, about 33% of cultivators and about 47% percent of agricultural labourers in India.

Women Work Participation in Rural Area (2011)

No.	Work Participation	India (%)	Maharashtra (%)
01	Total Work Participation Rate	30.0	42.5
02	Women Cultivators	28.8	38.3
03	Women Agriculture Labourers	48.5	50.3
04	Household Industry Workers	05.0	02.1
05	Other Workers	17.7	09.3

Census of India (2011)

Women work participation in agriculture sector is more in Maharashtra compare to India. Women are generally less able to participate in economic activities than men because they face unpaid work burden in home like household work, child care and rearing small livestock in rural area.

Role of Women in Sustainable Agriculture Development:

Natural resource depletion and environmental degradation has direct consequences for women's time, income, health and social support system. The knowledge of women regarding the forest produces which have high herbal and medicinal value gained through long experience is disappearing with deforestation. Unconscious and ruthless exploitation of natural resources, which resulted in environmental degradation, has a direct impact on women. About two to three million people in the forest and tribal belts of India earn their livelihood by carrying fuel load on their head and of these, 90 per cent are women.

Traditional agricultural methods largely utilized by women subsistence farmers boast environmentally friendly features, such as seed preservation, natural fertilizers and crop rotation techniques. It do not exhaust delicate soil. Against the backdrop of the Green Revolution reforms, it is clear that many of the recommendations for higher yields have had a serious impact on the environment. The negative environmental impacts of the Green Revolution are just beginning to show their full affect. The extensive chemical pollution in communities that utilize pesticides and herbicides is creating a health problem, which has excessively impacted on women.

Role of rural women in sustainable agricultural development cannot be ignored. Women have to become organizer for sustainable development in rural area. There is needed to organize the training camps and programs. Prof Swami Nathan suggested the structured areas for sustainable agriculture development. Women can play a significant role in sustainable agriculture development with help a program of watershed management, Field gene bank, village water bank, small farm management and self-help group.

Conclusions:

The environment has been severely degraded in recent economic growth in the world. Environmental quality is declining due to pollution, climate change, deforestation, industrialization. Giving women more rights, powers, wealth in such a situation will help them in conserving the environmental sustainability. In rural areas, women are more closely linked to the environment. They care about the environment as much as they care about the family. They can play an important role in protecting the environmental sustainability.

Women have been making a great contribution to bind the society and nation. Women have knowledge and skills in environmental resource management and ability to work together. They have capacity to care the environmental sustainability. They are good optimizer to manage the household with limited resources.

Agriculture is a primary occupation in rural area that is very close to environmental resources. More size of women population is working agriculture sector. Women have to become organizer for sustainable development in rural area. There is needed to organize the training camps and awareness programs for women about environmental sustainability.

Two percent of women in the world have own land. Other areas of ownership are controlled on women. They restrict women's lives. Women are able to own land and farm. Lack of sufficient land cannot lead to women empowerment and poverty alleviation.

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