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THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN CONSERVATION OF ENVIRONMENT

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Introduction

India is the country of villages. This is the country where the main occupation is farming that brings the men here closer to the nature. India is an agriculture country so that about 65% of population depends directly on agriculture for their life. More than 70% of the Indian population is rural based. Biomass plays a crucial role in meeting daily survival needs of the vast majority of the rural households. Water is essential for survival and its availability is related to biomass. The biomass-based subsistence economy is mostly non-monetized. Production and processing of biomass agriculture, forestry, and minor forest produce and village crafts based on biomass as raw materials are also the biggest sources of employment. Development imperatives have inevitably led to some destruction of the biomass through deforestation and environmental degradation.

Traditionally, women have been responsible for subsistence and survival for water, food, fuel, fodder and habitat, though they rarely get the credit for nurturing these life support systems. Added to these environmental destruction, exacerbates women's problems in a way very difficult from that of men. The challenge is to re-establish the symbiosis between communities, women and natural resources and reverse the trend of the negative impact of existing developmental paradigms. Women have always been the principal conservers of bio-diversity. Even today they perform duties such as seed selection, multiplication and conservation. The on-farm conservation traditions of rural and tribal women, with reference to agro-biodiversity are well known. Unfortunately, current food security systems depend on too few crops. It is important to expand the basis of food security by including large numbers of species and varieties of food plants still maintained by tribal and rural families.

Women have dealt with non-monetized biomass based subsistence economy of the household i.e. firewood, cow dung, crop wastes, organic manure, etc. In comparison men tend to destroy nature to earn cash even if it means creating hardship in their own families for their womenfolk to collect fuel and fodder e.g. sale of herbs and wood. The upshot is that women work as unpaid laborers on family farms with a greater role than men in operational decision making. The population pressure has increased male migration, which in turn adds to the women's work load. In effect this means that women's responsibilities extend from the household duties to working in the fields as well.

The Role of Women in Conservation of Environment

- A. **Chipko movement:** The movement was an act of defiance against the state government's permission given to a corporation for commercial logging. Women of the villages resisted, embracing trees to prevent their felling to safeguard their lifestyles which were dependent on the forests. Deforestation could qualitatively affect the lives of all village residents but it was the women who agitated for saving the forests.
- B. **Green Belt movement:** Another movement, which is one of the biggest in women and environment history, is the Green Belt movement. Nobel Prize winner Wangari Maathai founded this movement on the World Environment Day in June 1977. The starting ceremony was very simple: a few women planted seven trees in Maathai's backyard. By 2005, 30 million trees had been planted by participants in the Green Belt movement on public and private lands. The Green Belt movement aims to bring environmental restoration along with society's economic growth.
- C. **Rachel Carson:** One of the outstanding women environmentalists is Rachel Carson. Rachel Carson (1907-1964) was a scientist, writer, and ecologist. Rachel Carson went to the Pennsylvania College for Women, majoring in English, but she was inspired by her biology teacher so she switched her major to biology. She became more interested and focused on the sea while she was working at the Marine Biological Laboratories in Massachusetts. Her eloquent prose led to the publication of her first book, *Under the Sea-Wind: A Naturalist's Picture of Ocean Life*, in 1941. In 1949 she became chief editor of the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS). Her second book, *The Sea around Us*, won the National Book Award sold more than 200,000 copies. After that she retired from FWS and became a full time writer. After her third and final book about the sea, *The Edge of the Sea*, Carson focused on effects of chemicals and pesticides on the environment.
- D. **Maria Cherkasova:** Maria Cherkasova (1938-) is a journalist, ecologist, and director of Centre for Independent Ecological Programmes (CIEP). She is famous because of coordinating a 4-year campaign to stop construction of hydro-electric dam on the Katun River. After Cherkasova involvement in the student movement on environmental protection in 1960's, she began to work for the Red Data Book for the Department of

Environmental Protection in 1960's, she began to work for the Red Data Book for the Department of Environmental Protection Institute. She researched and preserved rare species until she became the editor of USSR Red Data Book. Her co founded the Socio-Ecological Union, which has become the largest ecological NGO in the former Soviet Union. In 1990, she became director of CIEP, which arrange and drives activities in an extensive range of ecologically related areas on both domestic and international fronts. Cherkasova recently has shifted her focus on children rights protection to live in a healthy environment and speaks for both inside and outside Russia and fodder collection grows and firewood becomes scarce, cow-dung previously spread on the fields, is used in the kitchen, thereby depleting soil resources and causing a negative effect on the livelihood of local people and environment.

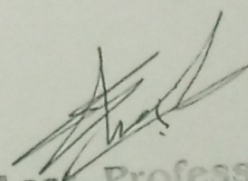
- E. **Bina Agrawal:** Binna Agrawal Expressed victimization of women inn political, economic and gender forms for her patriarchy and the process of satisfaction, privatization empower ship women and render them the hardest hit by environmental damage, further she suggested that patriarchy is the main cause of women's operation, sub-ordination and abuse.
- F. **Medha Patkar:** Very popular women who is the founder of the Narbadha Bachao Andolanand, nation alliance of people's movement. Now the women is sorsogon believe that for healthy family that they have got to protect environment. They have realized the need to conserve natural resources for next generations. She has served as the commissioner to the world commission on Dams and has received numerous awards for her great work.

Conclusion

This paper has discussed the various ways women have participated actively in environmental protection and natural resource management in order to ensure sustainable use of environmental resources. Women should be allowed to participate at the local, regional, national, and international levels on environmental issues.

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