



## Awareness, Attitude and Practices towards Environment Among Women in the Rural Areas of Rajouri (J&K)

### KEYWORDS

Environment Protection, Women, Awareness, Rajouri

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**ABSTRACT** *Women in the rural areas live in close association with the environment in relation to their overall daily activities. Although women can play big roles in the field of environment conservation but their role is often undervalued and ignored. The present study is an attempt to know the present status of women in the area, their activities which affect the environment and to assess the awareness among women about their role in environment protection. The study was based on a survey conducted in three villages of Rajouri, J&K, namely Muradpur, Choudhary Nar and Talwal, through personal interview with the help of a questionnaire. It was observed that there is a wide scope for women to realize their potential and strength in the field of environment protection so that they can transform themselves from effective home managers to effective environmental managers.*

### 1. Introduction

Women play a big role in conservation of the environment. They preserve biodiversity, promote sustainable development. In the day to day activities of tending their gardens, feeding their families, developing world women have become unrecognized heroines of environmental conservation and sustainable development. Skills are handed down from mothers to daughters to help strengthen the bond between man and his environment. Every day, all over the world women make countless choices that affect the environment. In their hands lie many decisions about the use of community resources i.e., water for the household, land for agriculture, wood for heating and cooking, plant and animals for food. Women in the rural areas are the major victims of environment degradation. Fuel, fodder and water collection are the accepted responsibilities of women. As it degrades, these basic necessities become difficult to collect which reduces their efficiencies and inputs. With the objective of women empowerment and to assess the role of women in environment protection, the present study was conducted in the rural areas of Rajouri.

### 2. Study Area

The present study was conducted in three villages namely, Muradpur, Choudhary Nar and Talwal in Rajouri tehsil of Rajouri district which is 154 km away from winter capital Jammu of the J&K state. The study area, Rajouri is one of the 8 tehsils in district Rajouri of Jammu & Kashmir State, India. In 2011, Rajouri had population of 619,266 of which male and female were 332,424 and 286,842 respectively. The general status of the study area (Village Muradpur, Choudhary Nar and Talwal) has been given in Table 2.1.

### 3. Methodology

To study the women interface with rural environment in Rajouri, a survey was conducted in three villages of Rajouri, through personal interview with women with the help of a questionnaire. During the survey 1/7<sup>th</sup> of the total households in each village (56, 30 and 20 from village Muradpur, Choudhary Nar and Talwal respectively) were taken. For the collection of relevant data, a detailed questionnaire was prepared involving various aspects such as socio-economic status, details of bovine population, fuel collection, waste disposal, water resources, agricultural activities and state of awareness.

#### 3.1. Socio-economic Status of the women in the study area.

The study revealed that majority of the women in the study

area was illiterate and housewives. The low percentage of working women was attributed to low educational levels which were due to less educational facilities as there was only one high school in villages Muradpur and Choudhary Nar and none in village Talwal. Also, the large family sizes had increased workload on women due to which their efficiencies had got reduced (Table 3.1).

#### 3.2. Details of Bovine Population

The average number of animals per household was highest in Village Muradpur (75 percent). Cows and buffaloes constituted the major livestock in majority of households. Animals were mostly grazed in agricultural fields, nearby forests and pasturelands. It was observed during the study that the forests have been degraded in large scale due to excessive lopping and cutting in the past. The grazing and pastureland were also in the bad shape due to over exploitation and overgrazing. Mostly women or their children were involved in the grazing of cattle. Cattle dung was usually dumped in the open and used as manure (Table 3.2).

#### 3.3. Fuel Collection Practices by the Women

Majority of the women used traditional *chullahs* for cooking purposes but when the *chullahs* were present inside the kitchen, majority of the households did not have the provision of the chimneys. This had resulted in increased level of indoor air pollution. The most commonly used fuel was firewood. The women were mostly involved in extraction and collection of dry wood, collecting crop waste, preparing dung cakes etc. for cooking purposes. Though LPG was used as fuel in most of the households, due to poverty, people were not completely dependent on it (Table 4.3).

#### 3.4. Waste Disposal Practices

Most of the inhabitants of these three villages defecated in the open. Majority of the women respondents revealed that they dumped their waste in the open to be washed away with rain. The waste was also put into the crops without any knowledge of nature of waste i.e., there was no segregation of biodegradable and non-biodegradable wastes (Table 3.4). It was also observed that major source of drinking water in the study area was *Bawlis* while other sources were hand pumps, tap water etc. and all the three purposes of drinking, washing, bathing and fetching water for the cattle were fulfilled from the same water body.

#### 3.5. Agricultural Practices

Women performed key agricultural tasks ranging from land

preparation, seeding, fertilizer application, plant protection, and harvesting, threshing, winnowing and storing products.

**3.6.State of Awareness**

Only few women respondents responded positively for adopting water harvesting practices. As the people were heavily dependent on rains for irrigation, so majority of them believe deficient monsoon is the major cause of declining food production. Smoke released from burning of low grade fuels and cigarettes smoking are found to be the worst source of air pollution. Most of them responded positively towards electricity saving by switching off the lights when not in use, maintaining gardens at their homes and awareness about environmental issues (Table 4.5).

**4. Conclusion**

From the present study, it can be concluded that although the women in the study area live in close association with the environment in relation to their overall daily activities. But their efforts and realization towards environment protection remains to be low.

**5. Recommendations**

1. Education to motivate women to auto efficiency.
2. Education on environmental awareness and family planning.
3. Education on agriculture and soil management.
4. Recycling wastes, limit water use and protection of existing forests by restricting the collection of firewood.
5. Organized environmental education workshops and street demonstrations.

**TABLES**

**Table 2.1: General Status of the Study Area**

| S.No | Parameters         | Village Muradpur | Village Choudhary Nar | Village Talwal |     |
|------|--------------------|------------------|-----------------------|----------------|-----|
| 1    | Status             | Rural            | Rural                 | Rural          |     |
| 2    | PanchayatHalqa     | Bathuni          | Choudhary Nar         | Peripheral     |     |
| 3    | Block              | Rajouri          | Rajouri               | peripheral     |     |
| 4    | Tehsil             | Rajouri          | Rajouri               | Rajouri        |     |
| 5    | Popula-tion        | Male             | 1136                  | 613            | 335 |
|      |                    | Female           | 1054                  | 575            | 319 |
|      |                    | Total            | 2190                  | 1188           | 654 |
| 6    | No. Of Literates   | Male             | 316                   | 282            | 93  |
|      |                    | Female           | 440                   | 413            | 177 |
| 7    | No. of House-holds | 401              | 211                   | 104            |     |

(District Hospital Rajouri, status as on: 31-03-2006)

**Table 4.1: Social status of the women in the study area.**

| S. No. | Question            | Options      | Number (%)       |                       |                |
|--------|---------------------|--------------|------------------|-----------------------|----------------|
|        |                     |              | Village Muradpur | Village Choudhary Nar | Village Talwal |
| 1      | Status              | Housewife    | 53(94.6)         | 25(83)                | 19(95)         |
|        |                     | Working      | 7(5.3)           | 5(17)                 | 1(5)           |
| 2      | Family Type         | Nuclear      | 46(82)           | 7(33)                 | 9(45)          |
|        |                     | Joint        | 10(18)           | 23(77)                | 13(65)         |
| 3      | Educa-tional Status | Illiterate   | 25(45)           | 16(53)                | 9(45)          |
|        |                     | Under Matric | 14(25)           | 4(13)                 | 10(50)         |
|        |                     | Matric       | 9(16)            | 2(7)                  | 1(5)           |
|        |                     | Above Matric | 8(14)            | 8(27)                 | 0              |

| 4 | Type of House | Kachha | 36(64) | 18(60) | 6(30)  |
|---|---------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
|   |               | Pacca  | 20(36) | 12(40) | 14(70) |

**Table 4.2: Livestock management by the women in the study area.**

| S. No. | Question                           | Options             | Number (%)       |                       |                |
|--------|------------------------------------|---------------------|------------------|-----------------------|----------------|
|        |                                    |                     | Village Muradpur | Village Choudhary Nar | Village Talwal |
| 1      | Bovine Population                  | Cows                | 75(17)           | 52(28)                | 24(24)         |
|        |                                    | Buffaloes           | 110(25)          | 72(39)                | 18(18)         |
|        |                                    | Goat                | 123(28)          | 19(10)                | 45(45)         |
|        |                                    | Sheep               | 48(11)           | 15(8)                 |                |
|        |                                    | Others              | 84(19)           | 28(15)                | 13(13)         |
|        |                                    | Total               | 440              | 186                   | 100            |
| 2      | Grazing Area                       | Agricultural Fields | 15(26)           | 19(63)                | 12(60)         |
|        |                                    | Near For-ests       | 21(28)           | 2(7)                  | 5(25)          |
|        |                                    | Pasture land        | 20(36)           | 9(30)                 | 3(15)          |
| 3      | Who ac-company them while grazing? | Son                 | 30(53)           | 14(47)                | 9(45)          |
|        |                                    | Daughter            | 7(13)            | 2(6)                  | 4(20)          |
|        |                                    | Myself              | 13(23)           | 9(30)                 | 5(25)          |
|        |                                    | Others              | 6(11)            | 5(17)                 | 2(10)          |
| 4      | Nature of Feed                     | Green Fod-der       | 50(89)           | 23(77)                | 18(90)         |
|        |                                    | Hay                 | 45(80)           | 20(67)                | 16(80)         |
|        |                                    | Crop Resi-dues      | 42(75)           | 33(10)                | 12(60)         |
|        |                                    | Tree Leaves         | 40(71)           | 5(17)                 | 4(20)          |
|        |                                    | Others              | 2(3)             | 4(13)                 | 1(5)           |
| 5      | How the dung is managed?           | Open Dumping        | 49(87)           | 28(94)                | 13(65)         |
|        |                                    | Managed Pits        | 7(13)            | 2(6)                  | 7(35)          |

**Table 4.3: Fuel collection practices by women in the study area.**

| S. No | Question   | Options             | Number(%)        |                       |                |
|-------|--|---------------------|------------------|-----------------------|----------------|
|       |  |                     | Village Muradpur | Village Choudhary Nar | Village Talwal |
| 1     | Do you have traditional challah?                             | Yes                 | 55(98)           | 27(90)                | 19(95)         |
|       |  | No                  | 1(2)             | 3(10)                 | 1(5)           |
| 2     | If inside the kitchen, do you have the provision of chimney? | Yes                 | 4(7)             | 2(6)                  | 1(5)           |
|       |  | No                  | 52(93)           | 28(94)                | 19(95)         |
| 3     | Fuel collec-tion   | Firewood            | 55(98)           | 29(96)                | 12(60)         |
|       |  | Dung cakes          | 10(18)           | 14(47)                | 2(10)          |
|       |  | Crop waste          | 51(91)           | 17(57)                | 18(90)         |
|       |  | LPG                 | 46(82)           | 22(73)                | 19(95)         |
|       |  | Electric heater     | 31(55)           | 5(17)                 | 13(65)         |
|       |  | Kerosene oil        | 23(41)           | -                     | -              |
| 4     | Source of fuel   | Agricultural fields | 53(95)           | 23(76)                | 18(90)         |
|       |  | Near Forest         | 34(60)           | 14(48)                | 12(60)         |
|       |  | Market              | 48(85)           | 23(76)                | 19(95)         |
|       |  | Others              | 3(5)             | -                     | -              |

|   |  |     |         |        |         |
|---|--|-----|---------|--------|---------|
| 5 | Do you sell firewood cut from forests? | Yes | -       | 1(3)   | -       |
|   |  | No  | 56(100) | 29(97) | 20(100) |

**Table 4.4: Waste disposal practices by the women in the study area.**

| S. No. | Question  | Options      | Number(%)        |                       |                |
|--------|---|--------------|------------------|-----------------------|----------------|
|        |   |              | Village Muradpur | Village Choudhary Nar | Village Talwal |
| 1      | Place of defecation                                 | Open fields  | 34(60)           | 25(84)                | 11(55)         |
|        |   | Toilets      | 22(40)           | 5(16)                 | 9(45)          |
| 2      | Do you know consequences of defecating in the open? | Yes          | 49(88)           | 80(81)                | 17(85)         |
|        |   | No           | 7(12)            | 6(20)                 | 3(15)          |
| 3      | How the rubbish is managed?                         | Garbage box  | 8(14)            | 2(6)                  | 1(5)           |
|        |   | Open dumping | 48(86)           | 28(94)                | 19(95)         |

**Table 4.5: State of Awareness among women in the study area.**

| S. No. | Question                                  | Options              | Number (%)       |                       |                |
|--------|---|----------------------|------------------|-----------------------|----------------|
|        |   |                      | Village Muradpur | Village Choudhary Nar | Village Talwal |
| 1      | Water Harvesting                          | Yes                  | 26(46)           | 11(36.6)              | 9(45)          |
|        |   | No                   | 30(54)           | 19(63.4)              | 11(55)         |
| 2      | Cause of declining food production        | Chemical fertilizers | 4(7)             | 8(27)                 | -              |
|        |   | Monoculture          | 7(12)            | 3(10)                 | 1(5)           |
|        |   | Deficient monsoon    | 45(81)           | 17(57)                | 19(95)         |
|        |   | Others               | -                | 2(6)                  | -              |
| 3      | Activity when air pollution is most       | Cooking              | 21(38)           | 10(33)                | 5(25)          |
|        |   | Brooming             | 5(9)             | 5(17)                 | 2(10)          |
|        |   | Smoking              | 29(52)           | 12(40)                | 13(65)         |
|        |   | Others               | 1(2)             | 3(10)                 | -              |
| 4      | Common Means of Transport                 | Bus                  | 54(96.5)         | 28(94)                | 20(100)        |
|        |   | Personal Vehicle     | 2(3.5)           | 2(6)                  | 0              |
| 5      | Use of Non-conventional sources of energy | Yes                  | 4(7)             | 0                     | 1(5)           |
|        |   | No                   | 52(93)           | 30(100)               | 19(95)         |

|   |  |                                 |        |          |        |         |
|---|--|---------------------------------|--------|----------|--------|---------|
| 6                                       | Do you segregate biodegradable and non-biodegradable wastes? | Yes                             | 11(19) | 1(3)     | 2(10)  |         |
|   |  | No                              | 45(81) | 29(97)   | 18(90) |         |
| 7                                       | Do you adopt the norm of small family?                       | Yes                             | 21(37) | 3(10)    | 5(25)  |         |
|   |  | No                              | 35(63) | 27(90)   | 15(75) |         |
| 8                                       | Mode of dusting  | Wet                             | 31(55) | 16(53)   | 13(65) |         |
|   |  | Dry                             | 25(45) | 14(47)   | 7(35)  |         |
| 9                                       | Is education must for girls?                                 | Yes                             | 52(93) | 26(87)   | 19(95) |         |
|   |  | No                              | 4(7)   | 4(13)    | 1(5)   |         |
| 10                                      | Do you switch off the lights when not in use?                | Yes                             | 52(93) | 27(90)   | 18(90) |         |
|   |  | No                              | 4(7)   | 3(10)    | 2(10)  |         |
| 11                                      | Do you plant trees or maintain garden?                       | Yes                             | 50(89) | 23(77)   | 17(85) |         |
|   |  | No                              | 6(11)  | 7(23)    | 3(15)  |         |
| 12                                      | Awareness about  | Ban on smoking                  | Yes    | 36(64)   | 13(43) | 9(45)   |
|   |  |                                 | No     | 20(36)   | 17(57) | 11(55)  |
|   |  | Laws for environment protection | Yes    | 2(3.6)   | 1(3)   | 0       |
|   |  |                                 | No     | 54(96.4) | 29(97) | 20(100) |
| Role of women in environment protection | Yes  | 96(82)                          | 26(87) | 19(95)   |        |         |
|   | No   | 10(18)                          | 4(13)  | 1(5)     |        |         |

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