



TOWARDS BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE SOCIETY: ROLE OF WOMEN.

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Jawaharlal Nehru said, 'educate a man and you educate one person, educate a woman and you educate the whole family'. If we want to secure the lives of our present and future generations, the role of women in Sustainable development cannot be denied.

Main Objectives of the Study:

1. To enumerate different ways in which women can help in fostering Sustainable Development.
2. To find out the role of women in shaping the policies and projects that are related to Sustainable Development.

Review Of Related Literature: 'Staying Alive- Women Ecology and development' by Vandana Shiva 1989 brought the issue of Women and their relation to environment to a wider audience. The topic has been the focus of discussions in various conferences, seminars and workshops, in connection with the 1992 UN conference on Environment and Development.

Method- A questionnaire with 50 questions was prepared and it was distributed to 100 women to find out the different ways in which women can help in fostering sustainable development. The results were analyzed and the conclusions drawn were as follows.

Findings: Role of women in Sustainable Development:

1. Women can adopt, control measures for food, water borne diseases and Vector borne diseases.
2. Women can help prevent global warming – by reduction in consumption of fossil fuel, use of unleaded petrol in automobiles, installation of pollution controlling devices in automobiles, etc.
3. Mitigation of climate change- trying to prevent future global warming by planting more trees.
4. Reducing degradable or non persistent pollutants eg. domestic sewage, discarded vegetables, etc.
5. Proper use of biosphere resources to avoid disturbance in ecological balance.
6. Encourage women to adopt a culture of modernity that gives credence to change and encourages people to have a concern for environment.

Conclusion: If we want our environment to be pollution free and avoid depletion of natural resources, it is necessary to empower women on these issues.

KEYWORDS :**INTRODUCTION:**

In the Indian society, till early nineteenth century, the most appropriate place for a woman was considered to be her home. People believed that women can best serve the society by looking after the well being of their family members especially the children. However in the 1970s, there was a change in the scenario. With the spurt in nuclear families, women started working along with men. According to Mehta and Sethi (1997), development of women is an integrated concept, extending to the economic, social and cultural fields. At the family and community level, women play a crucial role in handling and managing the natural resources and are suffering the most due to degradation of the environment. In communities around the world, women manage water, sources for fuel, and food. Women produce around 65 to 80 percent of food in the developing nations, while inheritance laws and social customs often prevent them from owning land and securing other benefits. The 1992 UN Earth Summit, Kenya's Green Belt Movement and the India's Chipko movement all highlighted the role of women's voices and perspectives in sustainable development. According to the classical definition given by the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development in 1987, development is sustainable if it 'meets the requirements of the present without compromising the capability of future generations to satisfy their own needs'.

Sustainable development was initially defined by the disciplines related to Ecology and Economics. Later on, Starkey and Walford in the year 2001 stated that, sustainable development may be a moral concept that seeks to define a 'fair and just' development. They suggest that since the environment is the basis of all economic activity and of life itself it is surely only right that the equality and integrity of the environment be maintained for future generations.

The aim of Sustainability development is to have a considerable impact on Economy, Ecology and Sociology. A drop in poverty, enhancement of quality and manufacture of useful goods and services are the objectives of a sustainable economy.

Ecological factors include genetic diversity, flexibility, and ecological productivity which attempt to stabilize the environment.

Sociological focal points are cultural diversity, social justice, cultural

sustainability, etc. Building a fair and free society is the base of this. If there is no social equality in the Society, then it is impossible to attain "intergenerational" equity. The economic life style of a few groups of people will still jeopardize the well-being of people belonging to other groups or living in other parts of the world.

This research aims to study the role of women in sustainable development by taking into consideration the adaptations of social, economical and environmental practices.

Main Objectives Of The Study:

- To enumerate different ways in which women can help in fostering Sustainable Development.
 - a) Role of women in protecting the environment
 - b) Role of women in promoting economic development
 - c) Role of women in social development and sustainability.
 - d) Role of women as educationists to promote sustainable development.
- To find out the role of women in shaping the policies and projects that are related to Sustainable Development.

Variables were identified through the literature survey. The methodology, as an important aspect in this study, was developed to capture the views of women. The findings were organized to reflect the role of women towards sustainable development in social, economical, environmental and educational aspects. This paper contends that women must focus on development of vision for sustainable development for the well being of the society.

Review Of Related Literature: The present paper aims to discuss the role played by women in fostering sustainable development in India. Therefore, literature pertaining to the fields of economical, social, and environmental & educational aspects was reviewed. 'Staying Alive- Women Ecology and development' by Vandana Shiva, 1989 brought the issue of Women and their relation to environment to a wider audience. The topic has been the focus of discussions in various conferences, seminars and workshops, in connection with the 1992 UN conference on Environment and Development.

A research paper written by Miroslav Ruskoand Dana Procházková, summarizes the results of a study of environment for 30 long years. It starts from cognition of the studied subject, i.e. environment, on the

present level and summarizes the conditions and limitations of sustainable development, as well as the tools, procedures and techniques used to solve the problems of the environment and tasks of managerial governance in the environmental section.

An analysis of Sustainable development in the Indian Economic perspective, was taken up by Dr.J.S.Patil, Principal and B. J. Kadam, a Research Student, in the Department of Economics, Shivaji University, Kolhapur. They analyzed the indicators of sustainable development and found its impact on Indian Economy. This research paper highlighted the role of sustainable development in economic growth of the country.

Method- This study aims to examine the role of women in promoting sustainable development. The methodology used to take up this study was Descriptive Research.

Descriptive Or Qualitative Research methods primarily describes situations. They describe the characteristics of the population or phenomenon studied. Descriptive methods do not make accurate predictions and they do not determine cause and effect relations. There are three main types of descriptive methods: observational methods, case-study method and survey research methods.

The Study was carried out over a period of six months. Random sampling technique was adopted. The sample included women living in the city of Hyderabad, Telangana. To study the role of women in sustainable development, with special emphasis on practical applicability, challenges and opportunities, informal interviews were also held.

The controllable variables that influence the opinion of Women are philanthropist sentiments, environmental friendliness, the intention to eliminate poverty, employment, the intention to be financially independent, inborn talents and abilities, etc. The Non controllable variables such as culture, tradition, economic growth, etc. also influence the study and were evaluated during the study.

The survey has indicated how women can be positioned to play an important role in promoting sustainable practices in the economy, the social system and the ecology.

A questionnaire with 50 questions was prepared and it was distributed to 100 women of Hyderabad district, Telangana State to find out the different ways in which women can help in fostering sustainable development. A questionnaire is a research instrument, that has a set of printed or written questions with a choice of answers, devised to collect information from the respondents, for the purposes of a survey or statistical study. The results were analyzed and the important conclusions drawn.

The present study has a few important limitations. Firstly, Undoubtedly women in business do create a positive impact and make a significant contribution to sustainable development in developing nations. Yet it is not easy for women to realize potential opportunities which support sustainable development.

Secondly, there are economic issues. The financial support is less in the developing countries due to financial barriers. Furthermore, assistance of policy makers, State governments, academicians, etc. will be essential in order to develop women entrepreneurship. Lastly, the proposed concept of the role of women entrepreneurs in establishing sustainable development in developing nations builds a strong platform to engage in more empirical investigations.

The Findings

Data for the Study was obtained from 100 women using a questionnaire based survey.

Out of those, 20 participants were subjected to interviews designed to collect unstructured facts.

Role of Women in Ecological Development :

Ecology is that branch of science which studies the way in which organisms and persons relate to each other and their environment. The relationship between the living organisms and their environment is studied in this branch of Biology.

Australia's National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable

Development (1992) defines ecologically sustainable development as: 'using, conserving and enhancing the community's resources so that ecological processes, on which life depends, are maintained, and the total quality of life, now and in the future, can be conserved'.

The findings of the study showed that, in most of the families in Hyderabad District, women were responsible for management and conservation of resources at home. Women took up the tasks of filling and storing water, identifying sources of fuel, food, fodder for the animals and looking after land. The entire community relies on women as they are the primary caregivers to children, the aged and the ailing persons in the family. With their age old and traditional knowledge of the environment and biodiversity, women cater to the needs of community people by giving them appropriate medicines, a balanced diet and crop rotation methods.

More than 50% of the women agreed that businesses should be run in ways that minimize negative effects on the environment. Many of them stated that garbage disposal and waste management are important areas that need to be focused on. They stated that an extra income can be generated by practicing waste management and proper waste disposal. According to them, women have an inborn ability of neatness and carefulness. Women should always be a part of the policy making teams and projects because they are the ones who take care of plants, waste disposal, etc. at home.

40 percent of the women were of the opinion that, public policies should be oriented, inter alia, to the carbon-labelling of goods, taxes should be lowered on climate-friendly products, and government grants and incentives should be given for more efficient heating and energy systems. Women also advocated higher investments in renewable energy, more climate-friendly manufacturing processes, and tougher carbon reduction targets. 70 percent women agreed that education plays a very important role in maintaining ecological balance. Communication of correct information is also very important. They advocated bringing about changes in attitudes and encouraging the adoption of greener lifestyles and climate-friendly values by their children. More education about climate change, its causes and ways to avoid it for all age groups is among the steps they advocate. 45 % of Women suggested that education and training of women in science and technology of climate change, will be of great help. They should be trained in producing renewable and sustainable energy for heating and cooking (Energia, 2007). Women are an untapped asset for promoting ecological development and for providing relief in the event of natural disasters (UNEP, 2004), because they work on land and have firsthand knowledge of natural resources.

Women constitute just over half the world's population, but women are responsible for feeding much of it. Women produce between 60 and 80 percent of food in developing countries — and yet they officially own only 2 percent of land worldwide, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization. The lack of equitable land rights remains a major obstacle to women's empowerment and poverty alleviation.

Role Of Women In Protecting The Environment:

Women were found to promote green practices and applications in production and services. More than 50% of women stated that they utilize green practices in housing, marketing, advertising, etc. Women also play a crucial role in Resource conservation, minimizing the use of nonrenewable resources relative to renewable ones thereby enhancing the energy return on investment.

70% of the women agreed that pollution of air, water and sound are not good for health and they should be avoided.

68% agreed that the natural resources are depleting and steps should be taken to preserve them. 80% stated that health and hygiene of the house is in the hands of women and it needs to be given utmost importance.

80% women agreed that, more women should be involved in decision making with regards to policies or programmes related to the conservation and protection of the environment. They should be allowed to take part at all levels, be it local or national, on decision making about important environmental issues. The percentage of men and women should be equal in all these committees. Advice should be taken from women and they should be supported in what they are already doing to protect the environment. Women as resource managers, as community activists, as environmental advocates must be recognized when strategies for the protection of environment are

being developed. Activities of Non-governmental organizations play a prominent role in creating awareness of green practices among women.

The Rio Summit on Environment and Development adopted "Agenda 21" which outlined a blueprint to effectively address the environmental crisis confronted by mankind. It incorporated a special chapter on "Promoting Education, Public Awareness and Training" and stated "education is critical for promoting sustainable development and improving the capacity of the people to solve the issues related to environment and development. The teachers in schools should be made responsible to develop and use educational methods to inculcate consciousness about preserving and conserving environment, among students.

77% women stated that Environment education has to be taught to all the students, irrespective of whether they are art or science graduates. 87% women agreed that Compulsory environment awareness camps should be initiated at the three levels for trainee teachers to get hands on experience.

39% women said that if an award or incentive is given at the Taluk, District, State and National level for teacher educators and teachers who contribute towards environment conservation, it will be of help.

Economic Development And Sustainability: Role Of Women –

Majority of women in the sample agreed that they wished to contribute to eliminate poverty. They wanted to earn for themselves and the family, so that the family is able to fulfill its needs. The burden of earning should not be only on men. If the focus is on employment of women, it reduces poverty and facilitates economic growth and sustainable development. However, if women are to be encouraged to work, it is important that they be provided with these facilities- Centres of child care, pre school facilities; training in vocational skills, etc.

70% women agreed that vocational skills will help in making them economically independent. 37% women agreed that social issues such as domestic violence and prostitution will be eradicated if women become financially independent. Economically independent women were more concerned about sustainable development when compared to the unemployed ones.

Hence for Sustainable and balanced growth of a society, we have to (1) encourage employment of women, (2) encourage women to be self-determined (3) Distribute resources fairly amongst men and women (4) Enable social interaction and integration and (5) Foster good human relations.

Social Development And Sustainability: Role Of Women

Women play a major role in fostering sustainable development of a society.

They always try to align their activities with cultural and traditional values. This is of great benefit because the traditional techniques are environment friendly and do not cause pollution problems nor lead to depletion of natural resources. The duties performed and the responsibilities fulfilled by women entrepreneurs for the wellbeing of the society are considerably high. Women entrepreneurs who participated in this study mentioned that they apply and use traditional methods of production, for example, indigenous agricultural methods in order to protect nutrition and freshness of vegetables. Women entrepreneurs and executives both agreed that contribution of women to the wellbeing of society is equal to that of men. More than 50% of the sample group agreed that women frequently participate in Social gatherings, charity events, professional development programs, political party campaigns, etc. and take leadership roles.

In any Society, Women play different roles like the roles of the housewife, mother, daughter and a good citizen. A Government of India study shows that more than 40 per cent of rural women directly or indirectly contribute to the upliftment of their families and bring about Social change. Harriet Beecher Stowe rightly said, "Women are the real architects of society".

65% of women agreed that for sustainable social development, the following aspects should be considered:

Social Acceptability: The status of women should be equal to men.

Women are the main characters who manage the wellbeing of a family. In a developing country, they face many challenges. They over a period of time, have successfully overcome these challenges. Hence they should be given the status they deserve.

Admission in schools and colleges: No discrimination should be made on the basis of sex while admitting children in schools.

There should be complete **transparency in appointment** in jobs. Women should be involved in making policies with regards to Sustainable development.

Social well-being: maintaining or improving prosperity, safety, health and food security.

The contribution of women is omnipresent and all-pervasive in every sphere of sustainable development as India seeks to march steadily towards the path of growth. Sustainable development is possible only with the active participation of women who are the catalysts of qualitative growth of future generation. The presence of women in various decision making bodies helped develop confidence among other women, opening up possibilities for future.

Women's Role As Educationists: To Promote Sustainable Development:

Jawaharlal Nehru said, '*educate a man and you educate one person, educate a woman and you educate the whole family*'. If we want to secure the lives of our present and future generations, the role of women in Sustainable development cannot be denied.

Women in both developed and developing countries are socially powerful in terms of education and are making a positive impact on the society. It is important to study how women can be utilized to achieve a sustainable economy in a developing nation.

50% of the women agreed that follow up and refresher courses of one/two weeks for the in-service teachers and teacher educators should be organized once in 2 years. This will make the teachers abreast with the latest happenings and developments in the field.

Teachers have always played an immensely important role for the progress and development of society. At a time when mankind is threatened by environmental disaster endangering the very existence of life on earth, the role of teachers has become all the more important. 80% women agreed on this point.

90% women agreed n campaigns against use of polythene bags and use of fire crackers, that could also make a difference in preserving environment.

78% women agreed that development of healthy attitudes among children augurs well for a sustainable future at the forefront of which remain school teachers and their the inclusion topics like "The role of school in environmental protection", "Environment as a discipline", and "Attitude development towards environmental awareness".

79% women stated that educated women are more likely to invest in the education of their own children, and have fewer children. Thus, there are both long term and short term outcomes that are beneficial. However, this requires equal access of women to education at all levels - a challenge which persists, alongside encouraging women to have knowledge of science and technology.

Findings: Role of women in Sustainable Development:

a. Women can adopt Control measures for food, water borne diseases and Vectorborne diseases. They should be involved in Policy making and projects.

b. Women can help prevent global warming – by reduction in consumption of fossil fuel, Use of unleaded petrol in automobiles, Installation of pollution controlling devices in automobiles, etc.

c. Mitigation of climate change- trying to prevent future global warming by planting more trees.

d. Reducing degradable or non persistent pollutants eg. domestic sewage, discarded vegetables, etc.

e. Proper use of biosphere resources to avoid disturbance in ecological balance.

f. Encourage women to adopt a culture of modernity that gives credence to change and encourages people to have a concern for environment. Involve them in decision making.

Elkington in 2004 suggested that there are three important aspects that create value in sustainable conduct, namely: (a) economic prosperity; (b) environmental quality and; (c) social justice. This concept has been further developed by him into “3P formulation” which consists of “people, planet and profit”. The positive relationship between women entrepreneurs and sustainability is affirmed by this study and it will be instrumental in developing a new model on sustainable values in businesses. Lastly, the analysis has highlighted several academic debates which exist in the area of Ecology and Economy in business practices. The role that women entrepreneurs play in sustainable development in the developing countries can be directly linked to and illustrated by the concept of Triple-Bottom-Line and 3P formulation. Triple bottom line (TBL), in economics, believes that Organizations should focus as much on social and environmental concerns as they do on profits. According to the TBL theory, instead of one bottom line, there should be three: profit, people, and the planet.

CONCLUSION:

If we want our environment to be pollution free and avoid depletion of natural resources, it is necessary to empower women on these issues. The women of the world are the key to sustainable development, security and peace.

The researcher concludes the study by observing that given the positive effect made by women on the economy and development, women play a key role in the developing world in promoting sustainable practices, socially, economically, educationally and ecologically.

Objectives of this study cover an extensive range from the study of the development of women to a sustainable economy, social system, and ecology. A descriptive research methodology has been used for this study and administered to a selected sample from a specific population that include women working in schools, home makers, etc. The Study was taken up over a period of six months and has used a questionnaire as the survey instrument. The survey has indicated how women can be positioned to play an important role in promoting sustainable practices in the economy, the social system and the ecology. In recent decades, there is an increasing interest in women development. Governments, policy makers and academics have paid special attention towards developing this area, particularly in developing countries. This interest has encouraged countries to establish and support women, especially in rural areas.

Most importantly, this concept has helped governments to eliminate poverty and create employment opportunities. Women are now playing a far greater role than they did at the introductory stages. They are better informed, more aware and educated than before. Now they are faced with another challenge to drive the economy towards sustainable development. Socially responsible, economically concerned and environment friendly activities in these enterprises carried out by women reach their own business goals. These businesses focus on doing business with the economically backward persons, helping the community to develop and foster different skills, paying and receiving fair payments, ensuring equal treatment to all workers and developing environment-friendly conditions in all business activities. Ensuring these will help in promoting sustainable development of a country.

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