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Editorial

The basic and most important unit of the society has been the family from the beginning. For the empowerment and development of the country, first of all it is necessary to pay attention to the moral, social, economic and cultural dimensions of basic institutions like family. Balanced development of the family is very important for the development of the society. Therefore, if we want to have a complete and balanced development of the country, then we need to lay maximum emphasis on the basic institution called family. It is necessary that we should not make any discrimination between son and daughter in the family and we must explain this to our sons and get them involved in their activities. Even today, those who belong to the old belief believe that a woman cannot get any freedom, she cannot go anywhere alone, she cannot roam anywhere alone, but today's youth refuse to accept these values.

Some people also say that the importance of the walls in the house, the same importance is given to the education of the boys in the society. But how is a house made? Who are in the base of the house? The base of the house is our daughters, our girls, that means they are related to the roots. If our root becomes weak in the society, then our house or house cannot be strong at all. There is a need to understand this social context in reality.

The extent of favoritism is reached when we see discrimination in small tasks. Some people think that a girl is someone else's wealth, what job she should do. That's why some parents discriminate between boys and girls and this discrimination is visible somewhere in our behavior, in feeding and dressing. This is sheer injustice. God has given the same brain to boys and girls and today girls are proving it by bringing better results.

Girls stay at their parents' house for only a few days, so it is our duty to pay deep attention to their education, upbringing, only then we can fulfill the concept of a strong society. God has made us the trustee of our children so it is our duty to treat all members equally with full justice because both boys and girls have same power, same soul. So we should give them equal opportunities for development.

The basic objective of women empowerment is the development of women and communication of self-confidence in them. Women empowerment is important for the overall development of the society. Empowerment of women is the most important social phenomenon because they are the creators. If you empower them, make them strong, encourage them, it is better for the society. Women and men are the basis of creation and human society. Both complement each other. These are the wheels of the chariot of life by which the journey of life runs

smoothly. The role of both has been equally important for stability in family and society. The basis of change and development in a society depends on the mutual interaction of men and women, walking step by step and equal mobility of both. A chaotic situation is created in social life when any one side lags behind. The history of mankind is witness to this that where women have been neglected, the development of the society has been stunted. The role of women in creation of creation, education of children, upbringing of family is much more important than that of men, thus her position becomes central in the society. Therefore, without the progress of women, there can be no upliftment of mankind and society. As far as India is concerned "Yatra Naryastu Pujayante Ramante Tatra Devta" means where women are worshipped. The deities reside there. With this ideal any Indian woman can feel pride in comparison to the western woman. The ideal of learning in Saraswati, the ideal of wealth in Lakshmi, the ideal of valor in Durga, the ideal of purity in Ganga, even the ideal of creation in the form of Jagad Janani we find only in India.



Professor Akhilesh Shukla
Chief Editor

CONTENTS

01.	Analysis of the concept of victim logy with special reference to domestic violence	09
	Akhilesh Shukla, Aanchal Shukla	
02.	Ecofeminism and Environmental Movements in India	17
	Rani Tyagi	
03.	Socio-Economic Conditions of Elderly Women Slum Dwellers	21
	Archana Mishra	
04.	Public Health and the Disputed Issue of Subsoil Water in Colonial Bombay City: 1860-1900	26
	Madhu Kelkar	
05.	Rock Art of Keraha: A Critical Study	33
	Neha Singh	
	Pritam Kumar	
	Mahesh Chandra Srivastava	
06.	Socio-Economic Inequalities in Chhattisgarh	39
	Shashi Kiran Kujur	
	Upendra Kumar Sahu	
07.	The Study of Augmented Reality Advertising and growing trends in India	46
	Rita Khatri	
08.	Drug Abuse and the Criminal Justice System	50
	Ajay Kumar Dwivedi	
09.	Theory of basic structure in reference to the amendment of the Indian constitution (An observation)	55
	Om Dutt	
10.	A Comparative Study on The Anthropometrical Variable of Volleyball and Basketball Players of Senior Secondary School	63
	Mohammad Muqarram	
11.	Effect of Anxiety and Achievement Motivation in Sports Performance	68
	Alok Kumar Pandey	
12.	Significance of projection	72
	Mohammed Imran Khan	
13.	Tourist places in Meerut District: an over View	78
	Poonam Chaudhary	
	Aanchal	

14. Give to All an Equal Liberty: A Study of Abolitionist Sentiments and Anti-Slavery Historiography in the Anti-Slavery Alphabet (1847) 85
Anirban Guha Thakurta
15. Supplementary effect of methionine on the growth and survival *Channa punctatus* 94
Umesh Shukla
16. Random-amplified polymorphic DNA profiling of isolates from dung sample of camel for sorting out distinct isolates 96
Shikha Tiwari
17. Estimation of nitrogen fixation by different genera of *Azotobacter* and *Azospirillum* and effect of herbicides on nitrogen fixation of *Azospirillum* in malate medium under laboratory conditions. 100
Vandna Krishna
18. Duration of parental care received by fawns of *Antilocapra* in captivity 106
Sonia Yadav
Raksha Modi
19. Salinity tolerance on germination and growth of chickpea (*Cicer arietinum* L.) 114
Archana Tiwari
Archana Mishra
20. Serum sodium level in men and Women belonging to different blood groups 117
Umesh Shukla
21. The Mystery of Maharaas, the Cosmic Dance 119
Patel Nilaben Alpesh kumar, Yogesh Bhatt
22. A New Dimension of Leadership: Ethical Leadership 124
Parul C. Dave
23. Impact of COVID - 19 Pandemic on Perceptions towards Physical and Mental Health 128
Bhavna L. Gajera
24. New Education Policy in reference with Physical Education and Sports 131
Minaxi Masukhbhai Patel

Ecofeminism and Environmental Movements in India

• Rani Tyagi

Abstract- *A gendered study of this paper demonstrates the relation between women and natural environment, where women is closely related with nature because of their biological abilities, but in their substance link with the Earth as a source of life. In India there are several movements where you can correlate environment with women empowerment and role of gender in different issues related with environment destruction and conservation. In this paper, I will look at the main trends of ecofeminism and the critiques that have been levelled against them. This paper will correlate the Indian environmental movement and highlight the interconnections of caste, class and gender issues in it. The paper will also analyze the Indian environment movements according to a feminist perspective. It will also help us to understand the importance of women in major environmental movements with special reference to Chipko and Narmada Bachao Andolan.*

Keywords- Ecofeminism, Chipko Movement, Narmada Bachaon Andolan

Introduction- A large number of literatures were there on Ecofeminism related with gender and environment all over the world. In India protection against environment and forest degradation is directly linked with gender. Environmental Movements related with conservation of environment like the Chipko movement in India, Anti-Militarist movement in Europe and the movement in US against dumping of hazardous waste, and Green Belt movement in Kenya, are all labelled as “ecofeminist” movements. According to Ecofeminist Ynestra King: “Ecofeminism is about connectedness and wholeness of theory and practice... (it sees) the devastation of the earth and her beings by the corporate warriors, and the threat of nuclear annihilation by the military warriors as feminist concerns”

Ecofeminism in India- In India, the most important person related with of ecofeminism is Vandana Shiva. Vandana Shiva (1988) believes in the theory of modern science which follow western, patriarchal and colonial project, which is inherently violent and show this violence against women and nature. This model doesn't represent the traditional model of “prakriti” as a living and creative process, the “feminine principle”, from which all life arises. In the process of development, nature has been browbeaten harshly and the womanly principle was no longer associated with activity, creativity and holiness of life, but was considered meek and as a “resource”. This has led to marginalization, reduction, dislocation and ultimately the

dispensability of women. She points to the experiences of women in the Chipko movement in the Garhwal Himalayas – where women struggled for the protection and rejuvenation of the forests. Shiva points out the critical links between the different development perspectives, the change brought about by the development and its impact on the environment and the people dependent on it for their survival.

Women, in rural areas, are both victims of environmental degradation as well as play important role for the protection of the environment. The fact that women is closely related with nature and are most severely affected by environmental degradation, they have “naturally” positive attitudes towards environmental conservation is, therefore, not acceptable.

Indian Environmental Movement- The Indian environmental movement represents a wide range of social conflict over degradation of natural resources. It has grown swiftly over the past two decades and represents conflict within villages or spread across large areas involving large number of people. The propagation of voluntary groups working within the environmental movement, are mainly concerned with activities that destroy the environment and impoverish local communities: building dam on rivers, mining activities, fishing, poaching and destruction of forest. The Chipko movement is considered to be the first environmental movement for the protection of forest against timber contractors where people hug the trees for the large scale destruction of forest due to commercial lumbering. In no time movement spread all over the country and women's active participation was a very novel aspect of this movement. They worked jointly with the men of their community, and in some cases even against them, when they differed with them over the use of forest resources. Women are more worried about the advantages of saving the forest and environment, and hence, survival and existence issues, rather than short-term benefits through commercial projects. The scope of the movement highlighted issues of alcoholism, domestic violence against women, less representation of women in village councils, as well as against mining activities. It helped women recognize their correlation between nature and human provisions. The movement was carried forward largely by women using Gandhian techniques of protest. Much has been written about the Chipko movement (Bandhyopadhyay-Shiva 1987), and women's involvement in it is celebrated by some feminist scholars (Shiva 1988) as an expression of women's special relation to nature. However, scholars like Shobhita Jain (1984), Ramachandra Guha (1989), Madhav Gadgil and Ramachandra Guha (1992), have argued that it should be seen in the context of the peasant struggle of the region.

Bina Agarwal's “feminist environmental” perspective sees the relation between women and nature on the basis of production, reproduction and, distribution. Women, belonging to poor backgrounds, are both victims of environmental degradation as well as play an important role in movements for the protection of the environment. Natural resource destruction both in terms of quality as well as quantity, the increasing appropriation by the state and by private individuals, as well as the decline in

communally-owned property, has been major cause for the increased class-gender effect of environmental degradation. The turn down in community resource management systems, increase in population and mechanization of agriculture, resulting in the wearing away of local knowledge systems, have increased the class gender implications of the environmental degradation” (Agarwal 1992).

The problems of forest degradation, water scarcity and so on, have increased women's work as now they have to spend more time and walk longer distances to get fuel, fodder, food and, water. The degradation of forests and the increasing privatization have constrained the access of villagers to forests and village commons. It has reduced the number of items that women could gather from forests and village resulting in reduced income. The slight women earn through selling firewood is also reduced due to deforestation. This has a direct impact on the conditions of poor households. The turn down in the availability of fruits, firewood has strained people of poor households to shift to less nutritious food and decrease the number of meals eaten per day. Family related gender biases can lead to women and female children getting secondary treatment with regard to food and health care. (Rao, 2012:132).

Critiques- Ecofeminist literature points out the historical misuse and supremacy of women and nature as going hand in hand, and both are seen as fatalities of development. It is taken as evidence that any harm to nature harms women equally, since women are seen as closer to nature than men. None of the ecofeminist literature attempts to establish this relationship through strong evidence. These female oriented images of women, in fact “retain the patriarchal stereotypes of what men expect women to be. “The use of images of women as 'nurturing' – like the earth, and of the earth as female abound are regressive rather than liberating women” (Biehl 1991:17-19). They only reinforce stereotypes. What these arguments seem to overlook is that concepts of nature, culture and, gender are “historically and socially constructed and vary across and within cultures and time periods” (Agarwal 1992:123). Critics like Susan Prentice (1998) argue that highlighting the special relationship of women with nature and politics imply that men is doing negative to the environment, unlike women, thereby ignoring the fact that men too have a perspective or inclination towards nature conservation. It also fails to analyse free enterprise and its domination of nature. Therefore, it cannot develop an efficient strategy for change, since it ends in polarizing the worlds of men and women with different dimensions.

Conclusion- Issues of environment and ecology came into highlight after the Conference on Environment and Development, at Stockholm in 1972. It tinted the discrepancy rates of spending of natural resources by the developed and Third World countries, i.e., issues of global political economy. Remonstrations against environmental destruction and struggles for endurance highlight the fact that caste, class and gender issues are deeply enmeshed in it. It is the poor, lower class and lower caste, and within them, the peasant and tribal women, who are worst, affected and

hence, they are the most active in the protest. Women's interaction with nature and their responses to environmental degradation must be analysed and located within the material reality of gender, caste class and race based division of labour, property and power. Women are victims of environmental degradation as well as active agents in the rejuvenation and protection of the environment. (Rao, 2012:138). The nature and impact of the processes of environmental degradation and the seizure of natural resources by a small minority are based in the dominant ideas about development, gender division of labour, as well as on differential of property, power and, so on. Hence, there is growing resistance to such inequality and environmental degradation, as reflected in widespread grassroots resistance movements. Environment and gender issues need to be considered together. (Rao, 2012:138-139)

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