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ROLE OF WOMEN IN ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

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ABSTRACT
Women played a crucial role in protection of environment in India ,In the Chipko Movement, which is concerned with preservation offorests and maintenance of the ecological balance in the sub-Himalayan region, is a social movement, -an important role has been played by women of Garhwal region and this paper seeks to explore their contribution to the movement. The Chipko Movement, a grassroots environmental movement in India, is well-known for its success in saving trees and promoting sustainable development. Woman's involvement in the movement challenged traditional gender roles and empowered them to assert their rights and interests. The paper argues that a more inclusive and gender-sensitive approach to environmental activism is necessary to address the complex challenges of sustainable development
KEYWORDS: *Women, environment, surrounding, movement, nature, development*

INTRODUCTION

A woman role into the protection of environment is has been noticed very remarkable since Ancient times.. Women are always closely connected with the surrounding nature; they are the manager of the resources in all the families of the communities and directly collect resources for the household from the nature. Such as water, firewood and several items etc. Women were playing key role in protection of environment from the time unmemorable. Women are more active in the field of environment protection than men because they are do household and societal work more connectively with the environment. They maintain and deal with the entire family and its various issues when men are busy in acquiring bread for the family. Women in national or international level working for the betterment of environment by different movements, strikes, protest etc. Women were led Chipko movement, Bishnoi movement, Green Belt movement and many more. Women environmentalist activist like Greta Thunberg, Jane Goodall, Medha Patkar, Kinkari Devi, Vandhana Shiva and many more are working for the protection of environment. Throughout the above discussion it has found that women were working whole heartedly for protect and improves the environment, this will be become more active and fruitful when other parts of the society stand with the women by holding hand in han

The word Environment derived from French word 'Environ' which means surround. Environment is the nature and surrounding in which all plants, animals, humans and other living beings live and operate. It is the interrelationships of land, water and air among themselves and with all living and non-living. Our human society and environment or nature has an inseparable bonding. Society emerged as per the prevailing environment therefore the living styles, dressing, food culture, language and festivities occasion of people are distinct different accordingly various environment. Environment can be divides into two category i.e. Natural environment and Men made environment. With the explosion of human population environment had started degraded very harshly due to which today entire world suffering from Global Warming, frequent Earthquake, explosion of Volcanoes, Tsunami, Flood, Acid rains and Drought etc. Now peoples were awake and understand the important of environment for the existing of human life therefore started to work for save environment. Societies were involved themselves into the work regarding the safeguard of environment. Being the better half part of the society Women's role into the protection of environment found deep rooted. Greek and Hindu Goddesses were animal as their 'bahana' which showed that woman playing great role in the protection of environment.

CHIPKO ANDOLAN (MOVEMENT)

The Chipko Movement is a famous environmental movement in India that emerged in the 1970s to protest against deforestation and to conserve forests. The Chipko Movement, which is also identified chiefly as a women's movement, originated in the Garhwal Himalayan mountain region of the present Uttarakhand state. The region is known for its fragile ecology, often prone to earthquakes, erosive rivers and steep valleys that are least conducive to agricultural growth. Its vast forest cover and reserves enables the local communities to pick

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the fodder, fuel and fibers that contribute to their daily sustenance. With no opportunities for viable income, the men folk search for income outside the region while the women are left in the villages often leaving them as the real custodians of the available resour

The movement was led by a group of rural women from the village of Mandal in the Indian state of Uttarakhand. These women, who were mostly illiterate, realized the importance of preserving the forests that sustained their lives and livelihoods. The Chipko Movement became a catalyst for environmental activism in India and inspired similar movements in other parts of the world.
The term 'Chipko' means 'to hug' in Hindi. The movement was named after the practice of hugging trees to prevent them from being cut down. The Chipko Movement originated in the Himalayan region of Uttarakhand, which was then a part of the state of Uttar Pradesh. The region was known for its dense forests and rich biodiversity, which were threatened by commercial logging and deforestation.

The Chipko Movement was started by a group of women from the village of Mandal, who were inspired by the teachings of environmentalist Sunderlal Bahuguna. Bahuguna was a prominent environmentalist and social activist who had been working for the preservation of the Himalayan forests for many years. He had been promoting the idea of 'ecology is permanent economy', which emphasized the need to conserve forests for sustainable development.

In 1973, a logging contractor arrived in the village of Mandal to cut down a large number of trees. The women of the village, led by Gaura Devi, decided to resist the contractor and save the trees. They formed a human chain around the trees and hugged them to prevent the loggers from cutting them down. The loggers were forced to retreat without cutting a single tree, and the women emerged victorious. The success of the Chipko Movement in Mandal inspired similar protests in other parts of Uttarakhand and other states in India. The movement became a symbol of people's resistance against commercial exploitation of natural resources. The Chipko Movement also raised awareness about the importance of preserving forests for ecological balance and sustainable development.

The Chipko Movement had a significant impact on environmental policies in India. The government of India enacted the Forest Conservation Act in 1980, which restricted the felling of trees in forests. The government also launched the National Afforestation Programme in 1985 to promote afforestation and reforestation in degraded forest areas.

The Chipko Movement also inspired similar movements in other parts of the world. In Kenya, the Green Belt Movement, led by Nobel Peace Prize laureate Wangari Maathai, promoted afforestation and community-based conservation. In Brazil, the Chico Mendes Extractive Reserve was established to protect the Amazon rainforest and the rights of traditional forest dwellers.

In conclusion, the Chipko Movement was a significant event in the history of environmental activism in India and the world. It was a grassroots movement that mobilized rural women to protect their natural resources and livelihoods. The movement inspired similar movements in other parts of the world and raised awareness about the importance of ecological conservation for sustainable development. The Chipko Movement remains a symbol of people's power and resistance against environmental degradation and exploitation.

CHIPKO AS AN ECO-FEMINIST MOVEMENT

There have been arguments-both for and against the Chipko Movement's label as a women's movement. While the contribution of the local communities consisting of both men and women is not ruled out, the extraordinary role played by women, who with firm determination pledged to restore the nature to its pristine, attracted worldwide attention. Undoubtedly, the movement has been a complete non-violent achievement, and can be likened to Satyagraha in the environmental arena. Since by nature women are known as nurturers of creatures- living and non-living-'ecofeminism takes the woman-nature connection a step further' (Turner, 2003, p.4. see URL). Most of the interpretations are heavily drawn from the arguments of Dr.Vandana Shiva with special references to her works, 'Staying Alive-Women, Ecology and Development in India' and her joint work with Maria Mies, 'Ecofeminism'.

Firstly, the nature is viewed in terms of feminine principle. Since the ancient ages, women in general and India in particular are considered as an inseparable part of nature. At one level, nature is symbolised as the embodiment of the feminine principle, and at another, she is nurtured by the feminine to produce life and provide sustenance (Shiva, 1988, p.38). This is a manifestation of shakti or energy, from which all existence arises. This energy is called nature (Prakriti). Nature, both animate and inanimate is thus an expression of shakti, the feminine and creative principle of the cosmos; in conjunction with the masculine principle (purusha), Prakriti creates the world. Further, nature is inherently active, a powerful, productive force in the dialect of creation, renewal and sustenance of all life (Ibid). From this, the world derives its activity and diversity manifest in the form of life on earth-mountains, trees, rivers, animals etc. The human being, so much a part of this world of creation, ideally is to live in consonance with nature. Regrettably, man's attitude

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towards nature has turned into that of a dominant force, who can subjugate nature to the maximum extent. This, in a way, symbolises man's eternal urge to demonstrate domination over woman

The large number of women participating, even defying their men, demonstrates their innate power or shakti. In India, inspite of women's suppression, there is a universal agreement, even if grudgingly, that women are nurturers of nature. The ancient civilisation and texts have often put women on a higher pedestal in the context of ecological/ environmental concerns. This view finds a wide spread critique among the Western scholars, thus bringing to the fore the cultural differences and the perception of nature as a sacred force to be restored and not exploited.

Another criticism that faces the ecofeminist perspective is that it failed to end the marginalisation of women. Though the movement has brought forth the issues of forest management and concern for ecological conservation, it failed to mitigate the woes of women who continue to move far and wide in search of resources necessary for subsistence. Further the non-participation of women in the official roles like joint forest management bodies further deprives them of playing a direct, constructive and authoritative role. Thus, the discrepancies in representation are obvious rendering the constructive role of women in the whole debate obsolete. The movement otherwise has brought in few policy changes related to the protection of environment and natural resources.

Whether the Chipko movement was led by women or witnessed a participation of large number of women due to which it was called an eco-feminist movement leads to several debates. What concerns the most in this context is the preservation of ecological resources. Even if an economic motive is attributed to the women's participation, it should be remembered that the resources needed for subsistence is far less than the massive tree felling efforts of the commercial contractors. Thus comparing women's subsistence needs to contractor's greed would be totally unwarranted. Even if a short-term economic motive is attributed to women's resistance, the scenario of long-term benefits of forest conservation cannot be underestimated

Lastly, the Chipko struggle is essentially an effort to save the natural resources and forests for the benefit of all. In the words of Shiva, 'the Chipko struggle is a struggle to recover the hidden and invisible productivity of vital resources, and the invisible productivity of women, to recover their entitlements and rights to have and provide nourishment for sustained survival, and to create ecological insights and political spaces that do not destroy fundamental rights to survival. Chipko women provide a non-violent alternative in forestry to the violence of reductionist forestry with its inherent logic of indispensability. They have taken the first step towards recovering their status as the other silviculturists and forest managers, who participate in nature's processes instead of working against them, and share nature's wealth for basic needs instead of privatising it for profit'(Shiva, 1988, p.95,

EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN IN THE CHIPKO MOVEMENT

The Chipko movement, also known as the Chipko Andolan, was a non-violent environmental movement that originated in the state of Uttarakhand in India in the 1970s. One of the unique features of this movement was the active participation of women. Women played a crucial role in the success of this movement, and their experiences offer valuable insights into the challenges faced by women who fight for environmental justice.

One of the primary experiences of women in the Chipko movement was the challenge of balancing their traditional roles as caretakers of the family and the forest with their new roles as activists. Women in the region were responsible for collecting firewood, fodder, and other forest produce, and they also had to take care of their families. However, they recognized the importance of protecting the forest and saw the Chipko movement as an opportunity to safeguard their livelihood and way of life. Women had to balance their responsibilities and find time to participate in the movement. This often meant waking up early in the morning and working late into the night.

Another experience of women in the Chipko movement was the challenge of overcoming gender discrimination. Women in the region were often seen as second-class citizens and were not allowed to participate in decision-making processes. However, the Chipko movement provided an opportunity for women to assert their rights and challenge patriarchal norms. Women actively participated in the movement and played a crucial role in educating the local communities about the need to protect the forests.

The Chipko movement also provided an opportunity for women to gain leadership skills and develop self-confidence. Women who participated in the movement became empowered and realized that they had the power to effect change. They also became role models for other women in the region and inspired a new generation of women to take up the cause of environmental protection.The participation

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of women in the Chipko movement was crucial to its success, and their legacy continues to inspire women around the world to fight for environmental justice.

IMPACT OF WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN CHIPKO MOVEMENT

Here are some of the ways in which women's participation in the Chipko movement made a difference:

(a) Increased participation: Women played a vital role in the Chipko movement and their participation increased the number of people involved in the movement. Women brought their unique perspectives and experiences to the movement, which helped to broaden its goals and strategies. Women's participation increased the number of people involved in the movement. Women brought their unique perspectives and experiences to the movement, which helped to broaden its goals and strategies. Women were able to mobilize other women in their communities and encourage them to participate in the movement. Women's involvement in the Chipko movement also helped to challenge traditional gender roles andto promote gender equality.

(b) Empowerment of women: The Chipko movement empowered women by giving them a platform to voice their concerns and to actively participate in the decision-making process. Women's involvement in the movement helped to challenge traditional gender roles and to promote gender equality. the Chipko movement empowered women by giving them a platform to voice their concerns and to actively participate in the decision-making process. Women were able to understand the importance of protecting forests and ecology and the impact of deforestation on their lives. They were able to share their experiences and knowledge with other members of the community and make a significant contribution to the movement. Women's involvement in the Chipko movement helped to challenge patriarchal structures and create a more equitable society.

(C) Increased awareness: The participation of women in the Chipko movement helped to raise awareness about the importance of protecting forests and ecology. Women were able to reach out to other women in their communities, which helped to mobilize a wider section of society. the participation of women in the Chipko movement helped to raise awareness about the importance of protecting forests and ecology. Women were able to reach out to other women in their communities, which helped to mobilize a wider section of society. Women's involvement in the movement helped to make it more inclusive and accessible to everyone. The Chipko movement also emphasized the importance of sustainable development, which was a key message that resonated with women. Women were able to understand the long-term impact of deforestation and the need to protect forests for future generations.

(d) Sustainable development: The Chipko movement emphasized the importance of sustainable development, which was a key message that resonated with women. Women were able to understand the long-term impact of deforestation and the need to protect forests for future generations. the Chipko movement had a significant impact on policy changes related to forest conservation in India. Women's participation in the movement helped to ensure that their voices were heard and that their concerns were taken into account when making policy decisions. The Chipko movement led to the creation of the Forest Conservation Act in India, which helped to regulate the use of forests and ensure their sustainable use. The Act also recognized the rights of forest-dwelling communities and their role in forest conservation.

(e) Policy changes: The Chipko movement had a significant impact on policy changes related to forest conservation in India. Women's participation in the movement helped to ensure that their voices were heard and that their concerns were taken into account when making policy decisions.\

Women were raised movement for the protection of environment by themselves and along with the men of the society. They were: -
Bishnoi Movement (1700): The movement took place in Khejarli, Marwar region of Rajasthan when the Maharaj of that area ordered his soldier to cut down the trees of the region which were believed as sacred by the villager. Amrita Devi along with the other Bishnoi villager hugged the trees to protect and encourage others to protect the trees. 363 Bishnoi villagers were killed in this movement. Later the Bishnoi state was declared as a protected area.

Silent Valley Movement (1978**)**: Silent valley is an evergreen tropical forest in the Palakkad district of Kerala. In the leadership of Sugutha Kumari along with others in order to protect the Silent valley from being destroyed by Hydroelectric power project of the Kerala State Electricity Board.

Jungle Bachao Andolon, (1982): This movement took place in Singbhum district of Bihar by the Tribal's started protest when the government decided to replace Sal forest with Teak. This protest also known as Greed Game Political Populism.

Appiko Movement, (1983): Appiko movement is the southern version of the Chipko movement. The Appikomovement was locally known as Appiko Chaluvali. The local people embraced the trees against the contractors. Narmada Bachao Andolon, 1985: This is organized by the farmers, environmentalists and human right activists protest against the Sardar Sarovor Dam in Gujrat across the

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Narmada river which flows thorough the Gujrat, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. To provides irrigations and electricity of above mentioned states in the cause of environment degradation. Medha Patkar and Babu Amte were the main leaders of the movement.

Green Belt Movement, (1977): The movement was initiated to stop Kenya's rapidly diminishing forest resources. It was the one of the biggest women movement for the protection of environment to bring environmental restoration along with society's economic growth and to empower rural women through environmental preservation. The movement led by Noble Prize Winner Wangari Maathai on the day of world environment day on 5th June 1977 when very few women planted seven trees in Wangari Maathai's backyard, till 2005 there are 30 million trees had been planted by its participants in private lands.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the participation of women in the Chipko movement was a critical factor in its success. Women played a crucial role in the movement, both as leaders and as participants. They brought a unique perspective to environmental issues and highlighted the importance of protecting the forests and the ecology of the Himalayan region for future generations.

The involvement of women in the Chipko movement challenged traditional gender roles and empowered women to become leaders and activists. It also helped to raise awareness about the importance of women's participation in social and environmental movements.

The Chipko movement and the participation of women in it were a significant milestone in the history of environmental activism in India. It not only protected the forests and ecology of the Himalayan region but also inspired a new generation of activists and social reformers to fight for environmental justice and social equality. The legacy of the Chipko movement and the participation of women in it continues to inspire environmental and social justice movements worldwide. It is a testament to the power of collective action and the importance of grassroots movements in bringing about social and environmental change

The participation of women in the Chipko movement serves as a reminder that environmental activism is not just a matter of protecting nature but also about social justice, gender equality, and human rights. Women have a unique role to play in environmental activism, and their voices and perspectives must be heard and respected

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