



Eco Feminism In India: A Road Initiated With Special Reference To Padma Awardees Of Year 2019-20

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Abstract: The paper is aiming to understand ecofeminism in an Indian context with special emphasis on year 2019-2020 Padma Awardees. It is an attempt to discover elements of ecofeminism with reference to one of the highest civilian award of India-Padma Awards.

Key words: Eco Feminism, Padma Awards, Environmental Conservation

Introduction:

Women across the globe are primarily accountable for management and protection of resources for their house hold. Women devote most of their active time for collection and storage of water, obtaining fuel from natural resources, preparing food from grains and vegetables and handling their family land. It is believed for ages that the principle duty for women is taking care of house hold, children and senior people of home. This duties helps them to increase their awareness regarding food and nutrition, biological diversity, seasonal change etc. For ages it has been observed that any change in ecology affects the living of women because both are closely associated with each other. They are linked in such a way that Environmental issues affects women health also. Pesticides used in farms negatively affects women health resulting Breast cancer, abortion etc.

Meaning of Eco Feminism:

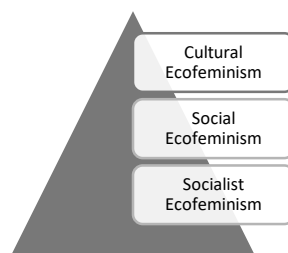
Eco Feminism consisting of Two Words Eco and Feminism. Eco refers to Mother Nature and feminism means equality given to women same as men. Ecofeminism is trying to establish an association between the dreadful conditions of the natural resources and repression of women. It is about women's struggle for her existence as well as environment conservation. It emphasis on deprivation of women in society and declining value of nature by mankind. This concept begun in the mid-1970s together with succeeding wave of feminism and the green movement. Ecofeminism is a dogma recognising climate change, gender equality and social injustice inherently associated matters with male dominated society.

The word Ecofeminism is first used by Francoise d'Eau donne in her book "Le Feminisme Ou la Mort" in 1974. She wants to create wakefulness amongst women to defend the world from male dominance. She believed that male dominance is harmful not only to women but for Mother Nature also. It was expanded

by Ynestra King around 1976 and it is converted into a movement by 1980 with the First eco feminist conference titling “Women and Life on Earth: Eco feminism in the 80s”.

There are different categories of Eco feminism like

- A) Cultural Eco Feminism
- B) Social Eco Feminism
- C) Socialist Eco Feminism



- A) Cultural Eco Feminism: According to Cultural Feminism due to dual advantage of biological supremacy of reproduction and empathetic nature, women are closer with mother nature.
- B) Social Eco Feminism: According to Social Ecofeminism women due to association with mother nature, women became more powerful with social and economic aspects like financial freedom and education.
- C) Socialist Eco Feminism: According to Socialist Ecofeminism association between women and mother Nature is due to biological aspect associated with women as well as social status of women.

Literature Review:

Bina Agarwal frames the notion of feminist environmentalism and tried to find out relationship between women and environment with gender, class, caste, race, the organization of production, reproduction and distribution. In terms of being a theory for action, “such a perspective would call for struggles over both resources and meanings” (Agarwal, 2007).

In an Article challenging The “Man” In Mangroves: The Missing Role Of Women In Mangrove Conservation, Alyssa Bosold discussed how women are vital stakeholders in the protection of mangroves. It discussed about the important forces and relations that controls the mangrove preservation and how knowledge regarding these social systems would help to create operative protection strategies. For safeguarding of these vital ecological resources, we must know and appreciate the different roles and relations of men and women with the mangroves (Bosold, 2012).

In an article U Sriranganath and Dr. Gomatam Mohana Charyulu concluded that the women from rural India throws light on the balancing sustainable environment. Some women characters stand for faith and conventional approaches to life. They prefer for rural life in walks of their live. They stand for protectors of nature which they feel it as their sole responsibility and are pleasant to all natural beings. The fight for equal rights and responsibilities is the only solution for the protection of nature and environment. It also give strength to women to protect herself from male domination and also act as a saviour of Nature. All the female protagonists of the novels show high strength of body and mind even in the critical moments of crisis and calamities in life. All of them are optimistic in nature hoping better life in future. Life is with full of troubles but the trouble are to be faced boldly by showing our wisdom (U Sriranganath, 2020) .

Ecofeminism in India:

From ages Indians worshipped shrishti (nature) and stri (woman). Indian Scriptures praises the potentiality of nature and women. We believed that shrishti and stri has power to nurture. Traditionally Indian women are playing an important role in ecological activities. Following are major Ecofeminism movements of India played vital role in the area of Eco feminism.

Bishnoi Movement (1731)

It is assumed that Environmental movement in India was started in Rajasthan by Bishnoi community during the year 1731 for cutting Khejri trees. This movement was started by Amrita Devi supported by 84 villages near Khejarli village. In this movement around 363 people from Bishnoi community gave their lives.

Chipko Movement (1973)

After Bishnoi movement notable environmental movement was started during 1970s popularly known as Chipko movement. Chipko Movement started as a demonstration against deforestation in the Northern state of Uttarakhand leaded by Gauri Devi and other women leaders. These environmental protests are on the Gandhian philosophy of nonviolence. It was related to environmental conservancy and problems of economic justice and social justice. Women activists non-violently opposed in such a way that the (then) Prime Minister of India Mrs. Indira Gandhi gave orders stopping commercial demolishing of trees in the state of Uttarakhand for time period of 10 years.

Save Silent Valley Movement (1978)

After Chipko movement next movement environment related movement started was Save Silent Valley movement. Chipko movement was from Northern India whereas Save Silent Valley Movement was from Southern India. In 1978 keralite poetess and environmental activist Sughathakumari protested against The Kerala State Electricity Board (KSEB)'s prospective hydroelectric dam through the Kunthipuzha River that flows over Silent Valley. After three years' demonstrations during the year 1981 the (then) Prime Minister of India Mrs. Indira Gandhi Announced that the Silent Valley will be preserved and consequently the Silent Valley forests were publicized as a National Park.

The Bhopal Gas Tragedy (1984)

The Bhopal Gas Tragedy happened during 1984 when poisonous gas leaked from the factory site of Union Carbide hurt more than 1,50,000 people and killed 20,000 lives in the city of Bhopal. Women sufferers headed by Rashida Bee and Champa Devi Shukla protested for reestablishment of the Children with congenital disabilities after this mega industrial tragedy. Their movement draw the attention worldwide which aided so many lives and they were given Goldman Environmental Prize 2004 on the 20th Anniversary of Bhopal Gas Tragedy.

Narmada Bachao Andolan(1985)

Next notable environmental movement was started during 1985 when Medha Patkar along with farmers, environmentalists and adivasi started a movement for rehabilitation of people who lost their land for Sardar Sarovar Dam, environmental conservation and changing height of the Sardar Sarovar Dam. The environmental problem was challenged in Supreme court during the year 2000 supreme court has given the verdict that the Dam can be built up to 90 meters height.

Save the Rivers Movement, (2007)

Radha Bhatt and her associates roved (padyatra) through different places in the state of Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh in non-violent way and found that the water level of the rivers had reduced due to big Power plants located on Himalayan rivers. She pointed out that this is going to create problem not only for the people of this states but other neighbouring states also. Then after she expedite the movement by starting an establishment under the banner "Save the Rivers in Uttarakhand"

Padma Awards :

Women always lead the front for Environmental protection in India. The Government of India is always taking creditable actions for encouraging women development and environment conservation. The Padma Awards are one of the highest civilian honours of India announced annually on the eve of Republic Day. The Awards are given in three categories: Padma Vibhushan (for exceptional and distinguished service), Padma Bhushan (distinguished service of higher order) and Padma Shri (distinguished service). The award seeks to recognize achievements in all fields of activities or disciplines where an element of public service is involved.

The Padma Awards are conferred on the recommendations made by the Padma Awards Committee, which is constituted by the Prime Minister every year. The nomination process is open to the public. Even self-nomination can be made (<https://padmaawards.gov.in/>, 2022) .

Brief Introduction of Padma Awardees 2019-20

Jamuna Tudu

Jamuna Tudu belongs to Jharkhand. Her journey as environmentalist started with five women's when they stopped prohibited chopping of trees near her community and started her project "Van Suraksha Samiti". People of Jharkhand knows her as 'Lady Tarzan'. Prime Minister Narendra Modi praised her work in his national speech on radio under "Mann ki Baat". She received Padma Shri for the year 2019.

Saalumarada Thimmakka

Saalumarada Thimmakka belongs to the state of Karnataka. She planted more than 8000 trees. But she became famous for planting 385 Banyan Trees with her husband sideways the Hulikal-Kudur highway. During 2019 Government of Karnataka initiated a project which was damaging the banyan trees, Saalumarada Thimmakka appealed to the (then) Chief Minister HD Kumaraswamy to intervene resulting modification in the project. British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) recognised her work and listed her name as one of the most influential and inspirational women in the world. She was given the Padma Shri for the year 2019.

Kamala Pujhari

Kamala Pujhari belongs to Odisha. She preserved hundreds of local types of paddy and encourages organic farming. She encouraged the farmers to use organic fertilisers. During the year 2002 she awarded with 'Equator Initiative' in South Africa. She was a member of the state planning board during the year 2018. She was given the Padma Shri for the year 2019.

Ms. Rajkumari Devi

Ms. Rajkumari Devi belongs to Bihar. Her knowledge of soil assessment helps thousands of farmers to earn good income from quality harvesting. She is known as 'Kisan Chachi', She started a Self-Help Group (SHG) and aided more than 300 women in her vicinity. She was given the Padma Shri in the year 2019.

Tulsi Gowda

Tulsi Gowda belongs Halakki Vokkaliga tribe of Karnataka. Her caste believed that women must take care of Mother Nature. She planted more than 30,000 trees. She is working with the Forest Department of Government of Karnataka. Due to her in depth knowledge about plants and trees people called her by different names like 'encyclopaedia of the forest, the 'tree goddess' etc. She was given the Padma Shri for the year 2020.

Rahibai Soma Popere

Rahibai Soma Popere belongs to Mahadeo koli tribe of Maharashtra. She is a farmer by profession who learnt the science of seed on her own. She has done commendable work in the area of Agro Biodiversity conservation by opening a seed bank. She is known as 'seed mother'. She started her fight against practise of using hybrid seeds, pesticides and fertilisers in farms located her vicinity. She learnt that use of hybrid seed is major reason for deteriorating health of children in her area. She received Padma Shri for the year 2020.

Smt Trinity Saioo

Smt Trinity Saioo belongs to Meghalaya. Due to her continuous work for a special variety of turmeric "Lakadong", she is known as Turmeric Trinity. She is instrumental in training organic farming techniques for women. Presently more than 900 farmers are availing her guidance. She received Padma Shri for the year 2020.

Conclusion:

Women are closely associated with protection of Nature. It is not the duty of women but each and every human being to safeguard the Nature so that we will have a better future. Eco feminism has initiated new standards for environmental conservation and progression of women in society. We can support women and eco feminism not only by providing supportive environment to live but motivating them by giving recognition like Padma Awards also.

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