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## WOMEN, ECOLOGY, AND EMPOWERMENT

\* Dr. V. Basil Hans \*\* Dr. Manjula Mallya M

\* Research Professor, Srinivas University, Mangalore.

\*\* Associate Professor and Economics Department Head, Government Women's College,  
Balmatta, Mangalore.

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### Abstract

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**Author Affiliation:** India

**Corresponding Author:**

Dr. V. Basil Hans

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*This article discusses women, the environment, and empowerment, emphasising women's vital role in environmental sustainability and their challenges in addressing environmental issues. Although women, especially marginalised ones, spearhead environmental conservation, they are under-represented in environmental policy and resource management decisions. The research emphasises the interplay between gender, ecological, and socioeconomic factors, showing that empowering women via education, resource access, and leadership can improve sustainable and inclusive environmental practices. It examines how climate change affects women's livelihoods, particularly in disadvantaged countries where environmental degradation disproportionately affects women. Feminist policies that combine gender equality and environmental justice create a more resilient, equitable, and sustainable future for everyone, according to the essay.*

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Corresponding author Email: [vhans2011@gmail.com](mailto:vhans2011@gmail.com)

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### Introduction

Feminist theorists and activists, including political leaders, researchers, and community organisers, have used many methods to explain the relationship between women, the environment, and empowerment and propose answers. Women suffer from hunger and malnutrition during economic and ecological downturns when society disintegrates and food production drops. Violence, disease, dowry, and bride burning have shown

that Indian women have been seen as victims of Fate and destiny for generations. This perspective limits their awareness that the cultural mold creating them is ephemeral and flexible, built from conceptions not inherent in nature but formed from historical “convention” to support social authority. Eco-feminism is a broad paradigm that links environmental degradation and women and marginalised people’s enslavement. This study analyses theoretical frameworks and empirical data to examine gender, nature, and power dynamics in environmental discourse.

While preparing for the 1974 UN Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm, notable figures began discussing gender and environmental protection. Women were first seen as victims of environmental degradation since large-scale development caused it. Global discussion on natural resource utilisation and gender-based division of labour and its effects shifted in subsequent years. The Brundtland Commission noted this. Several years later, this concept was broadened to include unequal resource access and women and men’s vulnerabilities, especially in developing nations. These articles enhanced awareness and interest in gender and environment, but global development discourse ignored the issue (N. Chukwu, 2014).

### **Environmental Education**

Environmental Education (EE) at NMSS was generally ineffectual. The study found that many students and instructors were interested in Botswana’s animals and environment. Students’ views of Botswana’s indigenous customs suffered. As a developing nation, we must promote environmental sustainability, protect indigenous traditions, and teach cultural heritage. Victim perspectives are essential for understanding concepts and values. Environmental issues are transnational, hence international education is emphasised. It can promote intercultural understanding, solidarity, reciprocal collaboration, and knowledge and skill sharing (M. Kanene, 2016).

NMSS Environmental Education (EE) instruction and acquisition had several concerns. Curriculum and methodology issues were raised. Educational institutions had inadequate resources and infrastructure. Tourism’s economic importance in Botswana makes animals and ecosystem important. This was clear from interviewees’ perceptions. Favourable attitudes towards animals and nature did not match the traditions of indigenous peoples who have lived with wildlife for a long time. Education should address real-world environmental challenges that need critical thinking and adaptability in instructional design.

## **Sustainable Development: Women Participate**

According to the UN Population Fund, women work longer hours than males, yet their contributions are underestimated, excluding them from sustainable development (Linda Anaeto & Oyibo Asoegwu, 2013). Women collect water, firewood, and other domestic essentials, making them both producers and consumers of resources. The empowerment of women, sustainable development, and women's development, if equally applied, will start a sustainable and democratic environmental advancement process. Over 25% of the world's population receives their food and social services from natural resources. In rural developing nations, natural resource extraction and exploitation are the main source of household income and livelihood. However, population growth, exploitation, policies, and technology have often overstretched resources, degrading productive lands and reducing productivity.

Climate change increases the vulnerability of rural communities, especially youth and women dependent on natural resources. Despite their demanding jobs as resource collectors and personal consumers, they have limited access and are excluded from economic policy decisions. This study stresses the importance of prioritising sustainable and democratic development. The UN has eight Millennium Development Goals to combat poverty, hunger, illiteracy, disease, gender inequity, and environmental degradation. This paper analyses the MDGs' environmental sustainability goals, particularly Goal 7, during implementation, emphasising the roles of producers and consumers of environmental resources and the link between gender and sustainable development.

## **Sustainability, Gender Parity**

After the Millennium Development Goals, the world adopted a set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in September 2015. Targets specify rhetorical goals, although these objectives are different. Targets are proposed ways to reach goals, while goals are the core objectives. Each aim might have up to four indicators to evaluate it. This document discusses MDG 3 and SDG 5, Achieve Gender Equality and Empower All Women and Girls. The international community should establish goals, standards, and measurements that promote gender equality for its own sake, not as a solution to economic underdevelopment (Michael Denney, 2015).

The argument states that investing in women helps people and communities. SDG5 promotes 'advance gender equality and empower women' for sustainable

development. Expanding this approach, the agenda proposes gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls. The goals aim to remove all forms of discrimination against women and girls worldwide, end harmful practices and child marriage, correct negative gender stereotypes, and provide equitable representation in politics and other fields. Due to this a structuration of power disparities that perpetuate gendered societal inequalities, there is a wealth of sophisticated understanding of female disempowerment. This discursive difference affects empirical data about the three areas and inhibits consistent assessment of female empowerment notwithstanding gender-based economic inequalities. A classic happiness proverb emphasises that not all predicted phenomena are quantified.

### **Climate Change Impacts Women**

The effects of climate change are global. Erratic monsoon seasons in South Asia, more harsh weather in the US, and longer, stronger heat waves in Europe are affecting agricultural productivity. We must also recognise that women's lives are mostly at risk worldwide. Two-thirds of subsistence farmers are women, but they produce only one-third of global food. Women lack money, time, education, and power to protect themselves from climate change (Sharma, 2016). Asia-Pacific, including India and China, is most at risk. Bangladesh in South Asia faces rising sea levels, flooding, and frequent cyclones. Women bear the economic brunt of gender disparities-related disasters and a surge in domestic and professional violence. Climate change and other natural phenomena have caused many natural disasters worldwide. Environmental hazards are worse in developing countries, especially for women. Women in poor countries are more vulnerable than those in industrial regions. In many flood- and drought-affected countries, social structure, norms, and land allocation systems limit women's access to ecological resources.

### **Women as Change Agents**

This global culture of transformation requires cultural and socioeconomic diversity, fundamental rights, conflict prevention, and higher living standards for all. It involves efficient collaboration and consumption selections for future expansion, which continues to hinder advancement. Growing emphasis on environmental conservation often offers remedial remedies for environmental stress rather than addressing growth strategy flaws or misalignments. Policy makers sometimes overestimate citizens' absorptive capacity in their countries due to their inability to appropriately assess development plans' impacts. Despite gender mainstreaming pledges, developing

nations lack sex-disaggregated data that separates information by gender. National policy can boost women's employment by providing legal aid or a proper framework. These may help groups address issues like salary inequality. Policymakers know the likely effects of an intervention, but it won't be implemented without political or other support, such as plans to improve women's education or technical abilities. Subsidies, finance, and inputs can help women find work. Several dimensions of empowerment help women find work, according to national policy. The efficacy of policy and institutional improvements to promote women's access to resources is unclear, limiting decentralised group engagement. As computer technology improved, people quickly adapted to the information society. A large percentage of leaders and politicians are men. Women seeking career and financial success in paid job and academia encounter many challenges (Elias, 2018). Thus, women must learn from powerful women how to survive and thrive in these difficult settings.

### **Engagement in the Community**

The phrase "sustainable development" was originally defined as "development that satisfies present needs without jeopardising the capacity of future generations to fulfil their own needs." This implies that a benevolent West should spread its global goodwill to less informed, yet adaptable regions ("underdeveloped areas of the globe"). As shown, wealthier nations' excessive resource use drives global war. This is an unsustainable development that the earth cannot sustain. Maintaining low incomes in the world's poorest populations is nonsensical. Without changing this unsustainable consumption behaviour, sustainable growth is impossible. Recent big gatherings on sustainable development have been more instructive, yet they present simplistic, dualistic frameworks without analytical depth.

The field's progress, according to this think tank, has allowed feminist ecological economics and gender perspectives to improve understanding of collaborative action in managing common pool environmental resources. To create effective policy, managers and policymakers must clarify these factors from their gender-neutral focus on privatising and commercialising resource utilisation, which favours the powerful. This oversight occurs globally anytime resource management is coordinated. Why poor people succeed more in local groups and projects is a key question for formal understanding. Questions about their systems' sustainability and women's participation reveal several ecological and social issues, especially resource base issues (Mahour, 2016). Similarly, generally

accepted systems that run mostly, strategically, and sometimes sustainably are based on probability and multi-utility concerning women's hard work. Informal institutions and property rights, mostly impacting women, undermine resource rationality, scarcity, and uncertainty distribution and worsen women's marginalisation. Active male users and men not directly involved in resource utilisation may also significantly affect resource management club fertility, according to studies. To facilitate common pool resource management, decreasing monopolies and excluding dominating entities would be implemented.

### **Cultural Barriers to Empowerment**

Increasing economy, education, and employment. Women around the world make tremendous movements. They run industries, do duties, and rule nations. They resemble an avalanche, crescent wave, or vintage wine together, yet individually, they are calmer and stronger. However, they are just starting to establish themselves in the ecosystem. Research shows that empowering women drives environmental solutions. Ensuring environmental safety, health, and sanitation empowers women. However, customary views and practices must change. It is one of the most unified cultures ever.

Business owners seek inventive and cost-effective ways to expand during economic downturns. Women in business have similar challenges as men, but they have fewer funds, networks, mentoring, and tools. Despite these challenges, they may promote environmental growth better. This study will evaluate how women entrepreneurs promote sustainability in their small businesses and the economic benefits of greener practises (Braun, 2009). A quantitative analysis included 374 Australian women with retail micro or small businesses. The statistics show that female and male entrepreneurs green their businesses for different reasons. Women entrepreneurs are more proactive in pursuing green networking opportunities, which helps them connect with like-minded businesses, grow their clientele, and find new resources. They can collaborate on green projects and expand their network of ecologically sustainable businesses. The results also show that many barriers prevent women entrepreneurs from running an environmentally sustainable business. Due to climate change and economic distress, many wealthy nations are focussing on green jobs to create new jobs. Infrastructure is being built to help businesses create and benefit from green markets. The study's findings should improve understanding of factors that encourage or discourage women's green enterprise participation, encouraging increased participation.

## Conclusion

Ecofeminism has shaped feminist ideas since Vandana Shiva's 1985 *Staying Alive*. Feminist rhetoric and environmental research and policy have suffered from this effect. In feminist discourse, ecofeminist literature is criticised for essentialism. In environmental study and policy, the 'women-environment' nexus is said to detract from urban management challenges. Incorporating gender into the process failed too. Women, environment, and development (WED) raises many challenges. Ecofeminists believe gender affects environmental perception and interaction. Natural resource exploitation meets basic necessities including food preparation, cleanliness, and resource acquisition. Gender division of labour separates men and women. Due to their gender-specific labour division, women's environmental link is distinct (Joeques et al., 1996). WED advocates say increasing women's resource control can boost sustainable development.

Women are thought to understand environmental resources better and choose 'low-impact' technologies. These are gender-sensitive data collection policies that integrate gender concerns into development efforts and target women. Environmental NGOs have completed such project orders better than official contributors. Misinterpretations of ecofeminism have occurred. Ecofeminism's mistaken polarising mentality promotes gender competitiveness rather than mutual understanding for complementary lifestyles and work patterns. Women and men have different roles. Changing situations drive such duties and obligations towards social growth. Thus, rural and urban locations, as well as social and vocational situations, must carefully scrutinise conventional efforts to empower women and women-focused 'development' programs.

However, ecofeminism's cultural, spiritual, and holistic perspective undermines Western rationality. Concepts from western intellectual traditions seem 'irrational', 'anti-modernist', and 'reactionary'. In late 1980s ecofeminist writing, academics converged to answer feminist essentialism claims. Policymakers and scholars worldwide value female participation in decision-making and development, as well as their ability to manage and mitigate environmental degradation and sustain natural resources. Empowered women help solve environmental problems, promote growth, and promote social justice. As the world becomes more unable to sustain unrestrained activity, ecological challenges related with worsened poverty are expected to become more severe. Global environmental degradation threatens humanity with unprecedented repercussions.

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