

# Young Women Eco-Activists in Tamil nadu- New Theory Building and Grass root Movement to protect Environment

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“Involving women in protecting the environment would help societies develop the sense of responsibility needed to maintain a good balance between humans and the earth's resources”- 59<sup>th</sup> Commission on the Status of Women 2018

## Abstract

The young women environmental activists are passionate, strongly committed, aggressively dedicated where some of them lose their resources, spend their time and energy to its maximum for addressing the global warming, deteriorating environment. Young women are really making a mark and turn their action into a movement to voluntarily approach and work with people without any expectation. India needs such volunteers among women and the environmental policy can no longer afford to exclude such women from taking their inputs in policy decisions. These women are emerging as force though they work in certain quarters with their own aim and it is high time that such women are to be invited and brought together, appreciated and brought to the visibility to inspire others. Similarly women's active participation from the public in Tamil Nadu has witnessed in recent rights based environment protection movements, and agitations where the women, the young girls, etc and contribute to new theory building and movement which indicates that young population and their contribution can no longer be undermined. This paper narrates the active contributions of the young women environmental activists in Tamil Nadu.

Key words: Environment. Young Women Women Movement, Innovations, Gender Impact Assessment, Gender budgeting

## Introduction:

The current global environmental issues and concerns have an impact on women and as such demands the active participation of women. Women cannot just remain as passive observers but have a strong role to influence. The importance of Women in protecting the environment was stressed in the recent 62<sup>nd</sup> Commission on Status of Women New York round table, at US. Women which underlined that women are associating with nature and have their concerns on conservation of nature and accordingly have been providing their contribution to protect the environment. However the change in the life style has resulted in new consumption behaviour which have equally priced in the name of environmental damages. It is necessary to mobilize the power of women to transform society and help to create a movement that inspires each and every one to take action to stop dangerous climate change. If a million women all make one better choice, however small, it leads to real change. Salvano Bricerno Director, United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, based in Geneva(2018) said “during the past four decades natural hazards such as earthquakes, droughts, floods and volcanic eruptions had caused severe environmental damage accompanied by loss of human life and livelihoods, as well as destruction of economic and social infrastructure. Economic losses had increased nearly ten-fold during that period and, in some cases, natural

disasters had amplified man-made emergencies. That was exemplified by the ongoing drought and the effects of protracted conflict on the people and socio-economic situation in Afghanistan. Women were often more adversely affected by natural disasters than men”, he added. There is a perception that, as the century draws to a close, global society is witnessing the exhaustion of a development style that is harmful to natural systems and fosters inequality among people. It is becoming increasingly clear that humanity must move towards a new style and a new concept of development based on the criteria of sustainability and equity.(Mari Nieves Rico 1998)

Youth can make their homes, schools and youth organizations more environmentally friendly by adopting environmentally friendly practices, recycling of different materials as well as preserving resources such as water and electricity. Engaging youth in environmental protection not only creates direct impact on changing youth behaviors and attitudes, but possibly influence their parents, relatives and families He advocated for going green in house, in transport and at community.( Ramchandra Acharya 2013)

There are several initiatives at the global, national and regional contexts with comprehensive and sustained policy for hazard awareness and disaster reduction. All such policy initiatives must be implemented from a gender perspective. It is essential to ensure equal participation of men and women in formulating and implementing policies and programmes. Every individual must understand that the natural disasters were social processes deeply rooted in global political and economic forces, with inescapable local impacts which the humanity has been witnessing every day. Such environmental imbalances, a consequent of failure of concern over sustainability has gender implications on division of labour, maternal health, women's longevity, household and economic structures where women and girls will be forced to bear the special risk. Hence strengthening their capacity to reduce and manage risk cannot be secondary or divisive concern, but an essential first step in building more disaster-resilient communities. There has been a switch from the traditional forms of life style to modern in recent and the consumerist culture is in its peak.. Capitalism and corporate culture with profit maximization focus hardly focus on sustenance and as such destruct the nature and damage the environment regardless of its implications on earth. The Economic theory on Phillips Curve underlines that there must be a trade-off between Development and Environment, where the nature's carrying capacity should not be disturbed. Given that there has been ever increasing demand for more space, more goods to be produced with the expanding population, which has direct impact and put pressures on the existing resources, its becomes inevitable to pay for the human pressures on planet earth which is being faced as Tsunami, cyclone, earth quake, floods, droughts, etc. It is highly realized that such natural disasters are primarily due to over exploitation of the natural resources, industrialization, urbanization, capital intensive technologies with indiscriminate exploitation of the mineral, forest , water, soil and other resources, beyond the nature's capacity to withstand. Deforestation and exploiting the forest reserves for the industrial and other modernization needs have lead to declining green cover which in turn resulted in declining ground water table, draining of water bodies, loss of monsoon, recurring drought, failure of agriculture, migration of people and desertion. People who were depending on farming find it no longer profitable as indiscriminate digging of Borewells by large farmers driven the small and marginal farmers to give up agriculture. Many farmers and cultivators leaving farming practices including labourers lead to increase in cost of labour and agriculture could not be continued even by large farmers. In such context, the farmers had switched to long term crops say tree cropping. The cropping pattern change has resulted in decline in food grain production which will have food security issues in the long run. The recurring drought, cut in fertilizer and other subsidies in the name of structural adjustment policies have been paid in the form of increasing farmer's suicide. The tree crops could not bear the cyclone which has been witness in the recent Gaja Cyclone in Tamil Nadu where millions of Millionaire farmers have been

deserted penniless over night due to complete wash out of the coconut trees. Green Revolution and increased reliance of chemical fertilizer helped in increasing the productivity but could not help in sustainable farming. Hence the school of thought which introduced green revolution is advocating to revert to nature farming methods, manure, bio fertilizer etc. There is a policy shift of reducing the support systems to farming and farmers are advocated to switch to new methods giving up chemical fertilizer. Coupled with decline in ground water table, drying water bodies confused the farmers who are left with no option but to continue with the same chemical fertilizers to ensure and maintain the same productivity. Complete shift to organic farming will have implications on their current productivity but will leave the resources for future generation. There are only sporadic attempts to partially or completely switching to organic farming particularly among the environmental conservationists.

Recent floods in Kerala, Orissa, and other States, Cyclone in Andhra, the recurring Tsunami and loss of lives in Indonesia and floods in US etc time and again inform that environmental degradation as consequence of over exploitation of the natural resources continues which will have its implications on future generation. The sustainable development goals (SDGs) have reiterated the need for protection of environment and sustainability. State initiatives and the commitment among the people is still lacking to adapt to environmental protection action and continue to sustain them. Thanks to various States which have already implemented policies to protect environment, ban plastic usage, introduced alternative to plastics, etc. Tamil Nadu State has announced in its rule 110 to ban plastic from January 2019 onwards. The plastic producers are on agitation already to put down such ban by the government. The energy saving methods and resorting to renewable energy sources have been slow and not sustaining be it bio resources use, bio gas, wind and solar energy etc. There are technologies which recycle the human waste directly and generate energy. The solid waste generated in millions of tones are being segregated and energy, bio fertilizer are being generated. But dissemination and replication of such model have been quite limited. There is an innovative technology to reprocessing of Plastic and mix with Thar laying long standing roads, but it has not been scaled up. Several such initiatives of energy conservation, solid waste management, and sustainable agriculture just remain as model.

Theoretically speaking, with the indiscriminate exploitation of planet earth for human consumption and capitalist production have resulted in lack of capacity to cope up where the economic loss has been quite huge and disaster response to replace the development structure put pressures on resource requirement. It is the vulnerable communities be it slum population in river banks, or fishing community in coastal belt or poverty households in rural areas who are forced to face and motivated to be in constant management of risk. The gender implications of the damage to nature and environmental degradation are huge. It has more impact on poverty ridden households than others.

There is a direct association between women's lives and degradation of environment. Given the social construction on the gender division of labour, the first and foremost persons get affected due to climate change, monsoon failure, drying water bodies, declining green cover and forest, migration, declining in density, urbanization and slum formation etc where the women will face drudgery and demand extra time to fetch water, fuel wood, fodder, and less time to improve their own productivity and skills. The social reproductive activities are completely unpaid and as such the women's subordination continues, the women's indigenous knowledge never got recognized to participate in decision making bodies on natural resource management, water shed, conservation of energy etc. By the year 2050 the international community would spend some \$300 billion annually, particularly if climate change and environmental degradation were not addressed immediately. (UN 2018). The cost of environmental degradation cannot be

quantified for all damages. The qualitative analysis of the damages say psychological illness faced and aftermath of any natural disaster on women and children etc cannot just be quantified but still it does involve cost and contribute to externalities.

### **Feminist Concerns and theoretical Perspectives of Sustainable Environment and Life Style:**

The eco feminist stand point underlines that nature must be protected and energy must be conserved to save the planet earth. The classic example of Chipko movement time and again tell us that how women had their concerns over nature and ready to lose their lives for protecting the tree from cutting. Vandana Shiva, Miet the eco feminists have expressed their concern that women have a privileged bond to nature because of their ability to give birth and hence emphasised on feminist environmentalism. Bina Agarwal established that the relationship with the environment is caused by different forms of interaction between human beings and their material interests where women dispose of different resources (time and money) and have different every-day-life experiences than men. The resource is being used and exploited by men and women differently on personal consumption, transport, energy use, decision making in industries on raw material usage, recycling and environmental policy areas. The consequences of environmental damage on men and women including water, food, living locations, income earning etc. are different. A survey conducted on men and women using the energy and conservation methods in Europe (2005) on recycling, energy and water consumption in the home, buying local produce to reduce transportation requirement, car related activities, air transport, renewable energy etc. revealed that women were generally more responsive to changing their behaviours towards more environmentally friendly practices home insulation, energy efficient lights, turning down the lights and other electric instruments when not in use, buying local, re-using and recycling, flying less cycling more...from changing the way human lives to keeping out the draughts..

#### **Eurobarometer: Men/Women taking personal action**

<b>Persons taking personal action</b>	<b>% of men</b>	<b>% of women</b>
Separating waste for recycling	76%	81%
Reducing consumption of energy at home	61%	66%
Reducing consumption of water at home	51%	58%
Reducing consumption of disposable items	38%	43%
Buying seasonal and local products	26%	32%
Environmentally friendly transport mode	27%	29%
Reducing use of their car	25%	23%
Purchasing a more environmentally friendly car	24%	17%

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Source: Eurobarometer Survey (2009)

Looking at the environmental issues in a gender perspective, it is observed that that the environmental institutions are gendered, and the individual environmental behaviour is also gendered where men and women have different relationships to the environment and as such have different impact on men and

women. The Environmental action and conflict are again gendered. Hence any initiative to protect the environment and seeking to resilience and gender differentiated analysis. The Gender-differentiated perspective focuses on women's responsibility for the environment, their knowledge stemming from their experience, their competence in every-day life. It is equally true that men and women think and act differently where women tend to have a higher environmental awareness than men, women show more willingness to act for preserving the environment, women are more sceptical towards technological risks and women act more environmentally friendly: say buy more environmentally sound products, eat less meat and their mobility behaviour is less environmentally harmful. But the Environmental policy tends to take women's time for environmental activities for granted and disregard their time use, share of non-market and market activities. It further excludes the needs of vulnerable group including elderly women, children, pregnant women etc. The threshold limits are oriented to the needs of a middle-aged healthy man and policies often focus on such women that the vulnerable. Free ships like Smokeless Chula, providing gas stove, mixer, wet grinder in Tamil Nadu, subsidy for household toilets etc have been to cater to the needs of the vulnerable. If it is analysed in a feminist perspective, it would appear quite stereotypical but still from environmental perspectives it helps to reduce drudgery to women and more leisure time for women to locate new avenues for their productive development.

### **Strengthening Women towards Sustainable life Style:**

Sustainable life style commence from individuals. It is often said that Charity begins at home. Hence instead of blaming people for their action, every individual in the society must take care of protecting environment by their small behavioural change and mind set. There are three key areas minimal environmental impact; not undermining the carrying capacity of resources (i.e. using only those that are renewable or replaceable over time) and ;helping people interact with the communities and places in which they live. In the current neo liberal policy and globalization initiatives, women are taken a consumers and buyers and their agency in protecting environment is hardly recognized. In the advertisement gender stereotyped role is being reinforced where the mothers and children will be shown influenced by the visuals to buy more regardless of whether such buying behavior cause ills to environment.

Tiruchirapalli Corporation was declared as second cleanest city a couple of years back where it has successfully implemented the source segregation process of degradable and non-degradable collection from individual households by Self Help Group Women and announcing through audio the need for such initiatives. Every month the prizes are awarded to households which successfully segregated the wastes as per the direction, selecting on lottery method. Ban on use and throw plastics will be implemented. The Food safety Authorities and drugs Control departments regularly engage in surprise visits to protect consumers from adulteration and if identified penalize them with huge penalty and ban the shop to run anymore. Hence it is the joint efforts of the State, civil society, NGOs, industries, and individuals who all come together to sustain any initiatives and contribute towards sustainable life style. There are number of ways that the women and men can contribute to protect the environment. Some of the young women environmental activists and their initiatives to sustainable life style and environment protection are described below.

### **Individual Initiative towards environment protection and promoting Sustainable life style:**

There are number of ways by which individuals can contribute to sustainable life style in general and women in particular. Several researches across globe have evidenced that women had higher rates of recycling products such as paper, cans, plastic and clothing, recycling data suggested that behaviours of men who lived alone were worse than if women also lived in the household more consistent behaviour of

women (Labour force survey module in Ireland on Recycling and Energy Conservation, 2005). It can be of any of the following

- Completely running homes off solar power
- Sustainable mini-house from a recycled shipping container in a forest and never has to rely on electricity again
- Integrated farming system to not to leave even a single space to waste with paddy farm, vegetables on the bud, fishing pond and poultry on the top and small plants on the bunds of the pond, mushroom cultivation, tree crops on the field banks, green fencing etc
- Complete organic farming involving women as farmers to recognize their agency with recycling of solid waste, reducing chemical fertilizer and reusing cattle waste, farm bio waste to improve the soil fertility and productivity without much labour cost and leading a green living without much dependence on outside buying
- A complete closed-loop eco system in old crumbling swimming pool who now only purchase things they absolutely can't grow themselves with positively contributions of having huge amounts of money on groceries and cut down on food waste by only picking what they need.
- Cut coffee and tea, cut coffee cups to protect the environment.
- Recycling of food waste, solid waste, garbage etc to home gardening and at the hostel premises
- Human waste based biogas generation and manure, kitchen gardening at the Educational institutions thereby reduce the waste, recycle and reverse the waste into wealth Gardening can be done with the involvement of the students which will be educative
- Sharing of experiences of best practices among students and monitoring the initiatives to sustain and change the life style and values.

Children can be the best to be focused right from the beginning who can be taught at schools on the following:

- Not to throw garbage in open but use only dustbin
- Use the toilet, keep it clean for others use
- Recycle the solid and liquid waste for home gardening.
- Keep the school environment cleaning and green and replicate the same at home.
- Grow vegetables, greens, fruits etc for self consumption, noon meal at School using the waste water, vegetable waste, to make them realize the value of the gardening, recycling of waste and saving, and above all the uses of organic vegetables.
- Same knowledge may be imparted to school children on avoiding junk food, packed food which are actually offering market other countries and their economy to grow, and alternatively using indigenous products helping domestic economic growth etc.
- The children in turn must be encouraged and assigned to transfer and share the knowledge to members at home in keeping the environment clean and practice them.
- Cut the number of coffee/tea consumed and the number of cups used
- Help to source segregate the degradable and non-degradable wastes to facilitate recycling

**Young Women Environmental Activists and their Initiatives in Tamil Nadu towards Changing Life Style of Women and Protecting Environment :**

**Ms. Alageswari – Iyalvagai Organic Farming :**

Alageswari: Founder of Iyalvagai lives in Oothugkuli, Erode Tamil nadu, has been totally engaged in promoting organic farming in Schools and public. She visits school voluntarily and engage in educating and creating awareness among the children to create school garden using the organic waste. The waste water from school is used to irrigate the plant, the children are trained to cultivate greens, vegetables, etc which is used there for noon meal scheme. The teachers opined that using such vegetables encouraged the students not to waste food and also gained tastes. Several households and farmers have got trained by her which she learnt from Father of Natural Farming Nammalvar in Tamil Nadu

She also helps and facilitate the organic farmers personally visiting them whether they are really doing organic farming and guide them to bring their produce to the monthly organic market being organized at Coimbatore, Tiruppur, Erode etc. She held that in Tiruppur they really struggle to get space of this market though people are receptive to organic vegetables. She runs a library with all her books and that library was established selling off all her jewels as she felt that jewelry per se is an idle resource cannot be used by any but library is not.

She participates in the national wide traditional food festival at Ahmadabad for the past five consecutive years and with her experiences she asserted that people in general are good and there is no divide, language is not a barrier as people from all over India are quite friendly, helpful and guiding to progress. She visits all the States as the friendship got established in the fair. By virtue of friendship from Sikkim which is one of the Indian States got adopted to complete organic farming has been visited and she met all the people concerned and Chief Minister of Sikkim, she proudly claimed. To disseminate such an initiative by the State, she has brought out a documentary film. Participation in such traditional food festival brings together the knowledge of traditional food in India and unity in diversity. For a long this festival had not got South India representation but Alageswari had sown seed. She could meet all tribal and their indigenous food variety where she prepares more than 50 items of value added products from traditional minor millets. She also participates the famous Chennai book fair and reprint all the books by Nammalvar and children books being published by Eyalvagai. All her books focus alternative food practices, alternative medicine, organic farming etc. She feels that children are the best Ambassadors and spend quality time with children to take the messages of protection of environment. She voluntarily visits home and schools for promoting terrace gardening and home gardening. She added that the organic farming is quite cheap as the cattle waste get recycled, the bio waste is just reclaimed where labour cost is cut half. So in the initial years if the productivity is lower unlike chemical fertilizer, farmers need not have to worry because the cost has been cut by half, labour problem is taken care of which was quite intensive in inorganic farming to get fertilization, pesticide, removal of waste after harvest and above all improved soil fertility etc, It can be easily scaled up and returns will be several times higher than inorganic farming she claimed.

### **Valli Saran: Waste Management and Proposis Removal**

Ms. Valli Saran, Founder of Karaikudi-based 'Oor Koodi Oorani Kaapom' ( Jointly let as preserve water bodies) lives in Karaikudi in Tamil Nadu She is a young woman eco activist and recipient of several awards has been engaged in practicing and propaganding the message that source segregation of waste into reusable and non-reusable of both solid and liquid waste and recycle productively for value addition not only helps to treat the waste and start life with nature not with chemical. She strongly believes in individual action where she claims that if one reduces waste by 70%, it will generate 30 percent fine compost n 40 days. So every household woman who are involved in social reproductive activities can contribute to segregate dry and wet waste and get four pots to separate and recycle using the recycle methods. The liquid

waste have microbes and serve as effective liquid cleaning agent mixed with herbs instead of using the chemical based commercial cleaning liquids. She also involves in removing Proposis trees which is a water absorbing plant have lot of implication on ground water decline. She mobilizes the youth to work on eliminating proposis and save the earth to have a better water table. It is done through personal visit and video conferencing. There are challenges in sustaining the continuous engagement of youth but still it is done with all vigour and commitment.

#### **Ms. Banu Chithra – Chemical Free Re-usable – washable sanitary napkin to handle Menstruation :**

Banu Chithra an IT HR Manager got inspired by Nammalavar to engage herself in life style changing and sustaining traditional menstrual hygiene management practice through reusable cloth pads in :Thoomai” organization. She is an environmental activist creating awareness regarding environmental-friendly reusable sanitary napkins, particularly among women in tribal communities. When she met with an abortion and the pains she underwent, made her think over to work towards protecting the women from Reproductive tract infections and related health issues, infertility. When she met the Nammalvar Group at Loyola college the idea occurred to her where the group came offered that idea Now she has been engaged in reusable affordable cloth pads not as an enterprise, but an outsourcing activity where several women groups are involved in producing sanitary napkin at Chennai and its outskirts. The women groups presence has been exploited by the corporate bodies where the products of the companies have been marketed indirectly through SHGs as their makes. It was felt that it should not be done and Banu Chithra took up the initiative. It is primarily to take care of the infection due the gel power (chemical) applied in commercial pads, the plastic used etc, and secondly to take care of the disposal of the used napkins which adds to the solid waste management and further infection of being improper disposal. Whatever the methods of disposal of the used napkins at present practices they are not sustainable and hence cloth based reusable napkins are advocated for.

She claims that the traditional methods of handing menstruation were sustainable and the beliefs given are not superstitious. If they have been asked to stay aside and excluded and prevented to go to temples, it is primarily to protect the health of the women and offer them rest. It must be understood positively instead of making it as an issue. When plastic sheet is used it will not permit the air go free but the cloth napkins does. Uterus needs a required coolness to free from the formation of cysts, but the use of plastic based, gel based napkins creates heat which in turn resulted in the formation of cysts around uterus to provide coolness which in turn may result in serious infection, irregular periods, or over bleeding and ultimately to infertility, psychological illness, etc. So reusable sanitary napkins give freedom from plastic.

#### **Ms. Rajeswari: Herbal Cosmetics from Medicinal Plants:**

Ms. Rajeswari Preethi Herbals has been engaged in producing and selling, offering training on herbal cosmetics and medicines. Keeping the skill shining and presenting better with soft skins among women became the order of the day. Huge money is being spent to present themselves better which are not guaranteed to be chemical free. Rajeswari took that gap to her advantage and started identifying the herbal based cosmetic products manufacturing and raw material. With all her keenness and commitment to be chemical free and serve the skins of the women better with herbal cosmetics, she spent more than a year to identify raw materials from the sources. She hunted to locate them from the natural field, juice shops, flower shops, fruit sellers etc. Collecting the herbs from the field, and other fruits and rose pedals, cucumber etc free of cost or for a minimal payment, gather thulsi, allovera and such herbal with medinal leaves from fields she started humbly and now grown as huge entrepreneur. She turned the beauty and

cosmetic industry into a social enterprise where the women are safe applying her herbal cosmetics and changed their life style free from chemicals. Rajeswari offers training and promises that her cosmetics is result oriented to remove pimples, and other infections.

Valli Musiri herbal napkins producer manufactures Sindhu napkin free from chemicals and also applies herbal extracts instead of Gels. She produces and train women on producing the napkin. It is her innovation that the commercial brands have gel which is chemical and producing herbal napkins are more healthy and takes care of uterus problem. A school drop out Valli is now exporting herbal napkins to Srilanka and visited Nepal to share her experience at South Asian Women Entrepreneurs Conference. She got several awards and got sufficient visibility to through media.

### **Muthamma in Tamil Nadu Tribal Activist:**

This frail tribal woman from the Irula community has been waging a courageous war for her tribe's right to forest land for several years now. She has taken on the powerful Isha foundation in Coimbatore. According to the activist, the organisation led by Sadguru Jaggi Vasudev took away land that rightfully belonged to about 200 tribal families. Muthamma is unable to live with her family that works at the ashram, and is currently working to spread word on her allegation that forest land has been illegally snatched by the foundation.

### **My Membership in Associations and Movements:**

#### **Save Western Ghats Movement:**

Save the Western Ghats Movement (SWGM) has been working for the past three decades to declare the entire Western Ghats as ecologically sensitive Zone. It is spread across 1.6 lakh sq km area, but only a part of the WG is protected by various States and majority of the area is put under stress due to human activities. As part of the save the WG movement, there are number of initiatives by an Tamil Nadu Based organization "Osai" and Mr. Kalaidasan is extensively working on propagating the ills of human expansion and activities threatening the WG. It is a huge damage done to nature if such practices continue and the State failed to interfere. It has been for the past three decades various initiatives have been made and as a culmination of the same, a three day National Conference, Exhibitions and Poster Presentation on various issues will be organized during Feb 1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> 2019 at Coimbatore in which co-ordinating the women for saving Western Ghat session will be organized by me. Saving the Western Ghats is saving nature and humanity. As an aftermath of announcement of the Conference announcements, the Government has stopped further infrastructure development for human occupation in Tamil Nadu. Several legal prosecution have been done every now and then by Osai organization and it has now turned as people's organization in which series of youth keep joining to participate and express their solidarity during the conference. Why Save the Western Ghats are on the limelight to create awareness and a small documentary film has been produced which is on the whatsapp and social media. The conference brings all concerned across the Nation and will have a huge conference discussion more than 20 sub themes. Several environmental activists and organizations working on protecting environment have joined and spreading the message. The conference would further add feathers to work more intensively to protect environment.

#### **Thaneer (Water) Organization : A people's movement**

Tiruchirapalli based Thaneer (Water) organization is a voice for protection of Environment in which I have been associated since its inception in 2014. It is an organization relentlessly working for preserving planet

earth by its intervention. It has Thanneer Student Clubs from Colleges who are involved in addressing the environmental issues including removing the advt boards and nails from trees, distribution of cloth bags during festivals to create awareness distribution of plants on girl child day to girl children at home, creating awareness in schools through traditional arts, street plays, lobbying with the support of media on solid waste management, Cauvery delta and drainage management, pond and lake revival and maintenance, tree plantation, removal of age old trees and replant successfully, minor millet promotion festival, traditional art training, and eco pongal, petition to the government, media representation on the pending environmental issues, say drainage mixing with Cauvery, arranging exposure visits to various places with environmental protective initiatives , green walk, trekking, joint action with various movements say Save Western Ghats Movement, invited talk and lectures in colleges by the environmental specialists, organizing annual Women Eco Conclave and conferences, recognizing the best performing institutions on green initiatives with Pasumai Award (Green award) etc. and involve in advocacy on various areas. Associating with such organizations has really brought adequate understanding on saving the planet earth and role of women in protecting environment. Women and environment are inseparable and women find comfortable to associate themselves with nature. Women are increasingly engaged in social reproduction which inevitably forces them to be in care economy which often goes unpaid. Such unpaid work, places the women in secondary status where the 'agency' of women do not get appreciated. Such status accorded to women put them not represented in decision making on nature related issues. Such a neglect and exclusion of women in decision making may need to be addressed in the context of recurring natural disasters. The present market economic context, production takes places with huge waste generation; women engage in waste management, reduction etc, but their role as decision makers in protecting the environment often not recognized. Such a non-recognition has been questioned by the several environmental activists including Wangari Mathai, Metha Patkaer, Arundati Roy, Sunita Naraian, Rohini, Malathi Maithreyi, etc. Apart from such visible women, there are several other women are involved in protecting environment initiatives and the young women at the grass root also. Women have got inspired by the Natural Farming Advocate Nammalvar in Tamil Nadu. In the recent context be in Tamil nadu, Andhra or Kerala, the young women from grass root are emerging as force to work on rights based approaches. The anti Alcohol movement, Methane extraction project at Neduvasal Thanjavur, Sterlite factory at Thoothukudi, etc. which are concerned with the environment damage and the associated health impacts. These women formulate their own theories and put forth as new theories and movement. The young women described above are just a few examples and millions of such women across the globe are making their contributions to theory building. Such energies must be capitalized and properly channelized to safeguard the planet earth and reduce the impact of environmental damages to affect the vulnerable anymore.

To sum up gender questions and needs are different. Men and women may respond differently to policies addressing environmental concerns through modifying their behaviour and consumption. To understand the facts, it requires gender disaggregated environmental statistics. **Gender Budgets and Gender Impact Assessment** must be part of any policy as allocation of fund is the major priority. The bottom up approach is advocated to address the issues of natural disasters and other environmental damages. The impact assessment of any environmental damages on different sections of population and the vulnerable section needs to be addressed, where the grass root women environmental activists may be sought for. Voluntarism and social commitment with inclusion of women alone would help in strengthen the movement and sustainable life style and sustainable development will be possible.

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