

# Environmental Sustainability and Women Empowerment: Trends and Concepts Sub-theme: Women for a Green Earth: Environmental Conservation through Green Goddess Empowerment

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**Abstract-**The interrelationship between green initiatives and women empowerment is considered the foundation of sustainable development. This research paper highlights the environmental impact of women's empowerment and their role in it. It presents a study based on eco-friendly initiatives led by women, the nature of their participation in society, the challenges they face, and the social benefits of their efforts. The concept is clarified with concrete examples and international references.

**Background-** Sustainable development is rooted in the balanced use of natural resources. In rural and semi-urban areas, women play a critical role in managing water, fuelwood, food grains, and other resources through their traditional knowledge and skills. However, their contributions often go unnoticed due to economic and social barriers. Therefore, empowering women as a central strategy for environmental conservation is the need of the hour.

## INTRODUCTION

In the context of global environmental crises such as climate change, pollution, and deforestation, the integration of women empowerment and environmental conservation is crucial. Women not only contribute to environmental protection but also lead lifestyle changes, resource conservation, and grassroots-level transformations. This paper explores such initiatives through the lens of the "Green Goddess" concept, portraying women as central agents of sustainable development.

## OBJECTIVES

1. To analyze women-led environmental initiatives.
2. To highlight women's contributions to sustainable

development.

3. To study the social transformation brought about by such initiatives.
4. To identify challenges faced by women in this sector.
5. To offer policy-level recommendations for the future.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

- Vandana Shiva, in *Staying Alive*, highlights the ecological knowledge and strength of women.
- UN Women (2018) reports emphasize the influence of women's leadership across multiple levels of environmental progress.
- In India, organizations like Navdanya, SEWA, and Avni Foundation (Thane) are working successfully under female leadership.
- Wangari Maathai's Green Belt Movement raised environmental awareness among women across Africa.

## Role of Women in a Greener World

- **Sustainable Farming:** In Vidarbha, women are reviving traditional seed conservation through the 'Beejmata' (Seed Mother) initiative.
- **Energy Conservation:** In Latur, women are adopting solar cookers to reduce fossil fuel use.
- **Waste Management:** Women's SHGs in Thane are actively managing composting units.
- **Green Products:** In Nashik, women are manufacturing biodegradable sanitary napkins and eco-friendly items.

#### Implementation of Initiatives

- Institutions Involved: Village councils, district authorities, NGOs, and CSR funds.
- Training: Environmental education and digital skills for women.
- Outreach: Branding, sales, and awareness through social media.
- Case Example: Avni Foundation in Thane trained over 50 women in organic waste recycling.

#### Social Benefits

1. Economic independence for women.
2. Generation of local employment.
3. Promotion of healthy lifestyle choices.
4. Increase in environmental awareness.
5. Development of community cooperation and self-esteem.

#### Challenges Faced

1. Lack of training and financial resources.
2. Patriarchal mindset and limited decision-making power.
3. Insufficient technical knowledge.
4. Limited awareness about government schemes.
5. Competition in markets and lack of distribution systems.

#### SWOT Analysis

Strengths: Traditional knowledge, collaborative mindset, strong organizational capacity

Weaknesses: Financial vulnerability lack of technical skills Opportunities: Government schemes, CSR funding, market expansion Threats: Patriarchal barriers, natural disasters, marketing competition

#### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

- Type: Qualitative and quantitative (Mixed method)
- Sources:
  - Primary: 10 interviews, 50 questionnaires
  - Secondary: Reports, websites
- Sample: Women entrepreneurs from 5 districts in Maharashtra
- Analysis: Average, percentage, SWOT analysis

#### Data Analysis & Interpretation

- 70% of women reported facing social resistance when initiating activities.
- 65% of women participated in organic farming, sanitary production, or waste management.
- 85% of women said their financial condition improved after starting these initiatives Only 30% of women reported benefiting from government schemes.

#### Examples Of Sampling

##### 1. Dr. Snehal Donde

Dr. Snehal Donde is a distinguished expert in water conservation and environmental sustainability. As a Fulbright Scholar and member of esteemed organisations like the World Water Council and Indian River Basin Council, she has made significant contributions in these areas. Dr Donde has been honored with the National Jalshakti Award for her exceptional work in water conservation and river rejuvenation. She has extensive experience in education, having served as an Administrative Head for a Mumbai-affiliated institution and currently holding the position of Dean of Administration at Bhaktivedanta Research Centre. With a double PhD, she has guided numerous students and published extensively on environmental issues and climate change.

Dr Donde is an influential keynote speaker and trainer, passionately contributing to rural development, tribal rehabilitation, and river rejuvenation initiatives. Her team of engineering and PhD students is actively engaged in a project addressing future water demands. Dr Donde is committed to transforming young minds into solutionaries for achieving Sustainable Development Goals and climate resilience. Collaborating with BCC/CUNY University, she promotes the use of weather technology for air quality and soil moisture monitoring in Indian states to enhance agricultural practices. Dr Snehal Donde's exceptional expertise and dedication have garnered national and international recognition, making her an influential figure in the field of environmental sustainability.

##### 2. Rupali Lalit Shaiwale

Project manager at Paryavaran dakshata mandal  
Working in environment field in last 14 yrs. Conducted various awareness sessions on Solid Waste Management, Eco-friendly Festivals, environment conservation, importance of wetlands and water conservation (conservation of Natural water bodies at local level)

### 3. Swati Kharmale

Contribution of wild animals and birds in environmental conservation is also important: Kharmale Narayangaon, (Junnar)

From ancient times till today, the role of humans in environmental conservation has been important, but the contribution of animals and birds, like humans, has also been important in this work. These birds migrate tree seeds from one place to another through their droppings according to the changes in the natural structure. Those seeds later transform into trees and help in increasing the number of trees and forests. Environmental conservation is important for human health and the balance of the earth, said Smita Ramesh Kharmale, Forest Guard of Junnar taluka.

A one-day workshop on the role of youth in environmental conservation was organized by the Economics Department and Research Center Department at the Arts, Commerce and Science College of Gramonnati Mandal, Narayangaon, Pune.

### FINDINGS

1. Women's leadership is highly effective in green initiatives.
2. Despite facing challenges, women consistently contribute to environmental protection.
3. Women at grassroots levels act as agents of socio-environmental transformation.
4. Institutional and policy support is necessary for long-term impact.
5. There is a lack of strong networking and support platforms for women entrepreneurs.
6. Creating awareness about environmental empowerment is essential.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Launch dedicated green training centers for women.

1. Provide subsidies and low-interest loans to women SHGs.

2. Support environmental initiatives with branding and marketing training.
3. Introduce environmental leadership programs for girls in schools and colleges.
4. Include gender and environment-focused policies in all relevant government schemes.

### REFERENCES

- [1] Vandana Shiva - Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Survival in India
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- [6] Navdanya & Avni NGO websites