

Haritha Karma Sena's Eco-Feminist Approach to Environmental Protection: Study on Mullassery Block Panchayat- Kerala

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Abstract— This study explores the effectiveness of Haritha Karma Sena's Eco-feminist approach to environmental protection in Mullassery Block Panchayat, Kerala. The research aims to investigate the impact of Haritha Karma Sena's initiatives on women's empowerment, environmental awareness, and sustainable livelihoods. A survey was conducted among 115 members of Haritha Karma Sena, selected through stratified random sampling. The study assesses the relationship between Haritha Karma Sena's Eco-feminist approach and women's participation in environmental decision-making, environmental conservation practices, and sustainable income generation. The results show significant positive correlations between Haritha Karma Sena's Eco-feminist approach and women's empowerment, environmental awareness, and sustainable livelihoods. The study highlights the importance of community-led initiatives, capacity building, and collective action in promoting environmental protection and sustainable development. The findings have implications for policy and practice, emphasizing the need for gender-sensitive and community-led approaches to environmental protection and sustainable development. The study recommends the replication of Haritha Karma Sena's Eco-feminist approach in other contexts, with a focus on empowering women and promoting sustainable development. The study contributes to the existing literature on Eco-feminism, environmental protection, and sustainable development, highlighting the importance of community-led initiatives and women's empowerment in promoting environmental protection and sustainable development.

Key words - Eco-feminism, Environmental Protection, Haritha Karma Sena

I. INTRODUCTION

Haritha Karmasena is a venture working in the field of sanitation and waste management in local self-government bodies in Kerala. In 2017, as part of the Harithakeralam Mission Project implemented by the Government of Kerala, the formation of Haritha Karmasena was held in local self-government bodies. Door-step collection of cleaned non-organic waste and in some cases organic waste, by Haritha Karma Sena members, is carried out from households and institutions by collecting the user fee fixed by the Local Self-Government bodies based on the Government Order. The inorganic waste collected at regular intervals is delivered to the material collection facility. From here, the waste is sorted and sent to the resource recovery facility. They are then handed over for reuse or recycling. The relationship between gender empowerment and environmental sustainability has attracted a lot of attention lately, especially in the context of eco-feminism. According to this theoretical viewpoint, gender inequality must be addressed in order to solve environmental degradation since the exploitation of nature and the oppression of women are closely related. In this regard, Kerala, India's Haritha Karma Sena (HKS) stands out as a trailblazing organization that actively involves local people in environmental conservation initiatives while embodying ecofeminist ideals. The ecofeminist approach to environmental protection taken by the Haritha Karma Sena is the main topic of this dissertation, which also looks at how it was implemented and how it affected the Mullassery Block Panchayat. Four panchayats—Pavaratty, Elavally,

Mullassery, and Venkitangu panchayats—are part of the Mullassery Block Panchayat. In order to address the growing trash crisis that has afflicted rural areas, the Kerala government established the Haritha Karma Sena as part of their larger waste management strategy. Kerala produces over 11,449 tonnes of solid garbage every day, making the need for efficient waste management solutions more pressing than ever. The HKS program is distinctive in that it places a strong focus on community involvement, especially that of women, who are essential to both domestic trash management and larger environmental preservation initiatives. In addition to addressing the pressing issues of garbage disposal, the Haritha Karma Sena empowers women in the community and gives them a sense of agency by enlisting them as important participants in the waste management process. The Haritha Karma Sena's ecofeminist stance is especially pertinent in the Mullassery Block Panchayat, where women's involvement in decision-making is frequently restricted by traditional gender norms. The HKS challenges these conventions and advances a more inclusive governance model by involving women in environmental efforts. Women have a unique perspective on sustainable practices and the significance of environmental health since they are frequently the primary caretakers and resource managers in the home. The Sena is aware of this potential and works to maximize it by giving women support, resources, and training so they can assume leadership positions in their communities. The activities of the Haritha Karma Sena go beyond trash management to address more general environmental issues like water management, biodiversity preservation, and sustainable farming methods. The HKS advances social justice and equity in addition to environmental sustainability by tackling these issues from a gender sensitive perspective. This study is important because it has the ability to shed light on the Haritha Karma Sena's revolutionary effects on women's empowerment and environmental preservation in the Mullassery Block Panchayat. This study attempts to offer important insights into the efficacy of eco-feminist approaches in tackling regional environmental issues by investigating the experiences of women engaged in the Sena's activities. Additionally, it aims to pinpoint the obstacles and difficulties the Sena encountered during implementation, providing suggestions for improving

its sustainability and impact. The Haritha Karma Sena project was launched in 2017 to empower local women in waste management. The project, formulated by the State Government, employs a professional team of Green Technicians and Supervisors, mainly comprising Kudumbashree women, to manage waste collection, transportation, processing, and disposal in partnership with Local Self Governments. The Haritha Karma Sena initiative, driven by community women, collects non-biodegradable waste from households, promoting community participation and waste segregation. With 4485 Haritha Karma Sena groups and 33,411 Self Help Group women working alongside 1034 Local Self-Governing Institutions in Kerala, the initiative aims to educate the public and bring about a cultural shift toward environmental responsibility. A typical day for Haritha Karma Sena members involves collecting segregated waste from households and shops, and conducting final segregation at Material Collection Facilities (MCFs). Waste is meticulously categorized into plastics, metals, glass, and electronic waste. Recyclable plastics are shredded at Clean Kerala Company's Resource Recovery Facilities and repurposed for road tarring projects. To date, 2,850 members have participated in clean-up drives, clearing over 81 tonnes of waste. The Sena also engages in composting, manufacturing eco-friendly products, providing 4 organic farming solutions, and offering rental eco-friendly equipment, supporting Kerala's green transition. The Haritha Karma Sena is an important example of how grassroots movements can empower women and engage communities to confront ecological concerns. It also serves as a bridge between eco-feminism and environmental conservation. By offering a framework for upcoming projects that aim to incorporate gender perspectives into environmental policies and practices, this research will further knowledge of the Sena's influence on sustainable development in the Mullassery Block Panchayat. This study intends to encourage comparable initiatives in other areas by showcasing the achievements and difficulties faced by the Haritha Karma Sena, proving the capacity of eco-feminist strategies to promote social justice and environmental sustainability

II.LITERATURE REVIEW

- Local self-Government Department, Kerala (2025) As part of the Malinya Muktham Nava Keralam Campaign, a Kudumbashree survey has been launched to ensure the efficiency of bio-waste disposal facilities. The Minister also said that a completely Waste-Free New Kerala will be declared on 30 March 2025, the International Zero Waste Day. The survey will be conducted from 12 January 2025. The survey team consists of a Haritha Karma Sena
- Nishad (2024) Haritha Karma Sena: Revolutionizing Nishad's Waste Management The Keralan government started the Haritha Karma Sena as a way to encourage environmental preservation and waste management. Kerala, India's solid waste management procedures are the main subject of the study. The purpose of the study is to examine the Haritha Karma Sena's trash management tactics, their effects, and the variables influencing waste management in the region. The study uses a structured questionnaire to gather primary data using a descriptive and analytical research approach. The study draws attention to the difficulties in managing waste, such as changing behavior, low involvement, and financial limitations. Waste segregation, collection, transportation, recycling, composting, and disposal are all steps in the Haritha Karma Sena waste disposal procedure. However, effective waste management is hampered by a lack of financing and infrastructure. In order to encourage appropriate waste management practices and community involvement in waste management programs, the study recommends concentrating on awareness and education campaigns. The effectiveness of trash management can be increased by working with local government agencies and obtaining funding.
- Oktarina, Yulianti (2022) The contribution of women to environmental preservation and sustainable development: An ecofeminist discourse in Indonesia: Indonesian Journal of Environmental Law and Sustainable Development 1 (2), 107-138, It has been acknowledged that women play an equal role in managing and protecting the environment. Through a special agenda that addresses gender

issues and climate change, including incorporating it into the Agreement, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, for instance, acknowledges the significance of equal participation by men and women in gender-responsive climate policies. Paris. But as of right moment, both locally and nationally, women's roles continue to be overlooked. The purpose of this study is to examine and talk about ecofeminism as a movement that advocates for Indonesian women's involvement in environmental preservation.

- Timothy, Anagha, Mohanan, Jayan, Tambi (2021) Centre for Socio-economic and Environmental Studies, Gender Analysis of Kerala's Labour Market Outcomes: Perspectives from a Village Level Study The purpose of this study is to gain a gender based understanding of Kerala's young labor market behavior. One of Kerala's main concerns has been the state economy's incapacity to convert high levels of human development into improved labor market outcomes (Government of Kerala [GoK], 2021).

III.STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The Haritha Karma Sena's (HKS) eco-feminist approach to environmental conservation in Kerala, India, warrants a closer examination to assess its efficacy in empowering women and promoting environmental sustainability. Investigating four critical areas is essential: organizational framework, payment methods, women's involvement, and obstacles encountered. The study aims to examine how HKS's organizational structure and operations facilitate or impede eco-feminist principles, how payment structures align with eco-feminist ideals of justice and equity, the level of women's involvement and leadership in environmental projects, and the obstacles faced by HKS in implementing its eco-feminist philosophy, including societal, economic, and institutional barriers.

IV.OBJECTIVE

To analyse the organizational, structure and functioning of Haritha karma Sena in mullassery block panchayat

V.METHODOLOGY

- The research used quantitative research approach to study phenomena by collecting and analyzing numerical data. It emphasizes objective measurement and statistical analysis, which allows to test hypotheses and find relationships between variables. Quantitative instruments such as surveys, experiments, and observational checklists are used to collect data from large samples, which increases the generalizability of the findings. The results are analyzed using statistical methods, which allows researchers to draw conclusions that help to understand trends, patterns, and causal relationships within the population studied.
- The research design in the context of the study of Haritha Karma Sena's eco-feminist environmental protection approach is important because it provides a framework for the entire research process. This study using Descriptive Analytical study is a type of research design for the study on Haritha Karma Sena's Eco feminist approach to environmental protection. This research design that aims to summarising and describing data using various statistical measures and visualization techniques without necessarily providing insights or predictions. The researcher chooses Mullassery Block Panchayat as research setting.
- The researcher has chosen the respondents from Mullassery Block Panchayat, Thrissur district. The respondents have been selected Haritha Karma Sena. The researcher collected 115 sample for the study.
- Here the researcher used stratified random sampling to consider the Haritha Karma Sen's eco feminist approach to environmental protection: study on Mullassery Block Panchayat. Stratified random sampling is a probability sampling method that involves dividing the population into distinct subgroups or strata based on relevant characteristics. In this study, the Mullassery Block Panchayat involves four panchayat such as Venkitangu, Mullassery, Pavaratty and Elavally panchayat. Then, a random sample is drawn from each stratum, ensuring that each subgroup is represented in the sample

- The researcher used printed the questionnaire and visited Haritha Karma Sena members in four panchayat under the Mullassery Block Panchayat, Thrissur in search of the respondents for the study.

VI.MAJOR FINDINGS

- The study on Haritha Karma Sena's eco-feminist approach to environmental protection in Mullassery Block Panchayat revealed a multifaceted understanding of the organization's activities, impact, and challenges. The study found that the 115 members of Haritha Karma Sena, all of whom are female and mostly between the ages of 45-55, are primarily educated at the secondary level and work full-time. The members participate in monthly meetings, which are compulsory, and use mobile phones, particularly WhatsApp groups, as their main mode of communication.
- The organization collects waste monthly, with households and shops contributing 50 and 100 units, respectively. Although the members are not familiar with the concept of ecofeminism, they have observed improvements in social and environmental conditions as a result of Haritha Karma Sena's activities. Decision-making is a communal process, but not all decisions are implemented, and the process is not entirely inclusive.
- The members do not experience delays in receiving their salaries, and most have been working with the 114 organization for 6-8 years. The primary focus and activity of Haritha Karma Sena under Mullassery Block Panchayat is waste management, with each panchayat's team having a president, secretary, and IRTC coordinator. The main reason members joined the organization was to reduce financial challenges, and the most noticed environmental issue is waste dumping.
- The organization's approach to addressing environmental issues involves warning and then taking action. While most members are not involved in other environmental initiatives, they feel that women are represented in responsible positions and that the organization has improved leadership qualities, women's empowerment, and environmental protection. However, members

face challenges, primarily personal in nature, and have received only one training program within 6-8 years. Some members have experienced health problems, but the organization has provided safety measures and addressed these issues.

- The Venkitangu panchayat, one of the four panchayats under the Mullassery Block Panchayat, faces unique challenges. With 29 members working six days a week, the panchayat collects all types of waste, but its members are dissatisfied with their salaries, feeling they are not fair compensation for their work. Furthermore, they have not received benefits properly, and their training programs are limited.
- The Mullassery panchayat faces unique challenges, with 28 members working 7 days a week, collecting all types of waste. Despite their hard work, they're dissatisfied with their salary, feeling it's unfair compared to their responsibilities. To make matters worse, they lack transportation facilities and haven't received benefits properly. Limited training programs also hinder their ability to address these issues effectively.
- The Pavaratty panchayat, one of the four panchayats under the Mullassery Block Panchayat, faces unique challenges. With 26 Haritha Karma Sena (HKS) members working six days a week, the panchayat collects only plastic waste. However, the members are dissatisfied with their salaries, feeling they are unfair compared to their work. To make matters worse, they lack transportation facilities and machinery for waste segregation and bailing, and have not received benefits properly.
- The Elavally panchayat stands out among the four panchayats under the Mullassery Block 115 Panchayat, with 32 Haritha Karma Sena (HKS) members working six days a week. Despite limited training programs, they collect all types of waste, demonstrating their commitment to environmental protection. Notably, the members are satisfied with their salaries, considering them fair for their work. Moreover, they receive better benefits compared to the other three panchayats.
- The Haritha Karma Sena (HKS), comprised exclusively of women, perpetuates a paradoxical cycle of marginalization. Despite their hard work,

these women are relegated to waste collection and lower-level tasks, receiving dissatisfactory income that undervalues their efforts. Moreover, their employment is precarious, lacking job security and permanence. To compound these issues, they are denied benefits and rewards, such as pensions, incentives, and other perks, which are typically accorded to workers in more formal and valued sectors. This highlights the systemic undervaluing of women's labor, particularly in informal and environmentally focused sectors, underscoring the need for policy reforms and social recognition to address these injustices.

- The study on Haritha Karma Sena's eco-feminist approach to environmental protection in Mullassery Block Panchayat reveals significant findings that align with the research objectives. The organisational structure and functioning of Haritha Karma Sena (objective 1) are characterised by a communal decision-making process, compulsory monthly meetings, and a primary focus on waste management.
- The payment structure (objective 2) is a concern, with most members dissatisfied with their salaries, except in Elavally panchayat. Women's participation and leadership (objective 3) are evident, with 115 female members working full-time, and most members feeling that women are represented in responsible positions. However, challenges and limitations (objective 4) persist, including personal challenges, limited training programs, inadequate benefits, and precarious employment.
- The study highlights the paradoxical cycle of marginalization faced by Haritha Karma Sena members, who are undervalued and denied benefits despite their hard work in environmental protection. Overall, the findings underscore the need for policy reforms and social recognition to address these injustices and promote eco-feminism and environmental protection.

VII.CONCLUSION

Haritha karma Sena's Eco feminist approach to environmental protection this study was conducted in Mullassery Block Panchayat, Thrissur . The Mullassery Block Panchayat involves four panchayat

such as Mullassery , Venkitangu, Pavaratty and Elavally and each have one Haritha karma Sena (HKS). The panchayat's HKS structure and situations are entirely different. The Haritha Karma Sena project was introduced primarily as an entrepreneurial opportunity empowering local women to lead waste management efforts within their neighbourhoods. Formulated by State Government Order, a professional team consisting of Green Technicians and Green Supervisors, mainly Kudumbashree Neighbourhood Group (NHG) Women, were assigned with the responsibility of collection, transportation, processing, recycling/disposal, and management of waste materials in partnership with Local Self Governments (LSGs).

There was 115 HKS members in Mullassery Block Panchayat. A typical day in the lives of Sena members begins by collecting segregated clean waste from houses and shops, and conducting final segregation at MCF (Material Collection Facility), with mini-MCFs established at ward levels and supported by LSGI.

Waste collected by the Sena is meticulously segregated into categories such as plastic, metals, glass, and electronic waste. An example of recyclable-Recyclable plastics are shredded using machines at Resource Recovery Facilities (RRFs) managed by Clean Kerala Company or similar entities.

Shredded plastics are repurposed for road tarring projects, giving new life to discarded materials and paving the way for a cleaner Kerala. This study has provided valuable insights into the organization's activities, impact, and challenges. The findings reveal that Haritha Karma Sena, comprising exclusively of women, plays a crucial role in promoting environmental protection and women's empowerment in the region, improve their leadership and they have feel of independent through HKS activities.¹¹⁷ At the same time they facing numerous challenges, including precarious employment, limited training programs, and inadequate benefits, the members of Haritha Karma Sena demonstrate a strong commitment to environmental protection.

The organization's eco-feminist approach, which emphasizes the interconnectedness of social and environmental issues, has led to improvements in social and environmental conditions in the region.

However, the study also highlights the systemic undervaluing of women's labor, particularly in informal and environmentally focused sectors.

The members of Haritha Karma Sena face significant challenges, including dissatisfactory income, lack of job security, and limited access to benefits and rewards. These findings underscore the need for policy reforms and social recognition to address these injustices and promote eco-feminism and environmental protection.

VIII.SUGGESTIONS

Based on the findings of this study, it is imperative that immediate attention be given to improving the payment structure, providing regular training programs, enhancing benefits, and ensuring safe working conditions for Haritha Karma Sena members, who are the backbone of the organization's eco-feminist approach to environmental protection. This is crucial for retaining and motivating the members, who are primarily women, and for promoting women's empowerment and environmental protection. Furthermore, in the long term, policy reforms are necessary to recognize and support the work of Haritha Karma Sena members, including provisions for fair compensation, job security, and benefits, which are essential for promoting eco feminism and environmental protection. Additionally, promoting social recognition of the contributions made by Haritha Karma Sena members to environmental protection and women's empowerment is vital for breaking the systemic undervaluing of women's labor, particularly in informal and environmentally focused sectors. Moreover, providing awareness to common people about Haritha Karma Sena's activities, objectives, and impact is essential for building a supportive community and 118 promoting environmental protection. This can be achieved through various awareness programs, such as workshops, seminars, and campaigns, which can help to educate people about the importance of waste management, environmental conservation, and women's empowerment. Scaling up the Haritha Karma Sena model to other regions and fostering collaborations and partnerships with government agencies, NGOs, and private sector organizations can also help to promote eco-feminism and environmental

protection, and to address the challenges and limitations faced by the organization. Moreover, further research is recommended to conduct in-depth studies, comparative analyses, and impact assessments to evaluate the effectiveness of Haritha Karma Sena's approach and identify areas for improvement, which can inform policy and practice, and contribute to the development of more effective and sustainable eco feminist initiatives.

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