

WOMEN LEADERSHIP IN ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION IN VIEW OF LAUDATO SI

L. Maria Christia^{1*}, Dr. A. Vijayanand²

¹Research Scholar, Kalinga University, RAIPUR.

²Professor, Dept. of English, Kalinga University, RAIPUR.

*Corresponding Author: L. Maria Christia

DOI: 10.47750/pnr.2023.14.03.30

Abstract

This paper explores the important role of Women leadership in environmental conservation. The Encyclical called “Laudatosi” written by Pope Francis records the importance of women’s leadership as a foundation for preserving nature and its resources. The aim is to explain how women’s leadership fits into taking care of the environmental issues concerning the areas of governance. Women need to be motivated, lifted, and encouraged to safeguard the resources of the earth. Drucker says, “One does not ‘manage’ people. The task is to ‘lead’ people. And the goal is to make productive the specific strengths and knowledge of each individual.” This is what happens when a woman takes lead in the family and society. For she knows well about the strengths and weaknesses of each individual, each one’s capabilities and talents as ahead of the family, community, and society. Thus, as a good leader, the woman has the power to empower, support and sustain everyone to preserve and conserve the environment. She becomes a visible role model to inculcate environmental ethics in the hearts of others.

Keywords: Environmental conservation, eco feminism, to make productive, environmental ethics, integral ecology

INTRODUCTION

Women’s leadership can pave the way for the integral ecology in the family and society. It finds effective ways and means to solve many current grave environmental and social issues all over the world. For example, Anna Botsford Comstock, the first female professor at Cornell University, New York admired the beauty of the natural world. She is the author of a book called “The Handbook of Nature” and the designer of the first outdoor nature studies program for children who encouraged children to come out of the science world and love the natural world in 1885. Her pedagogy became the model for nature studies programs around the world, helping to foster a new appreciation for the importance of conservation in the next generation. Just like Anna Botsford Comstock, women should be educated and updated about the damage human beings have done to the environment which helps them understand the sweet melody of nature is disturbed and destroyed by the senseless efforts of selfish human beings.

Women, children, and poor people are the prime victims and most vulnerable people during natural calamities, war, and chaos. Pope Francis says,.

“In fact, the deterioration of the environment and society affects the most vulnerable people on the planet: both everyday experience and scientific research show that the gravest effects of all attacks on the environment are suffered by the poorest.” (Laudato Si, Para 48).

At this juncture we immediately need the leadership of women to pave way for the integral ecology as expressed by Pope Francis,

“We urgently need humanism capable of bringing together the different fields of knowledge, including economics, in the service of a more integral and integrating vision. Today, the analysis of environmental problems cannot be separated from the analysis of human, family, work-related and urban contexts, nor from how individuals relate to themselves, which leads in turn to how they relate to others and the environment” (Laudato Si, Para 141).

INTEGRAL ECOLOGY

These days we are experiencing multifaceted crisis called socio-environmental issues. We should uplift humanity who is very poor and at the same time, we should save the environment. As Pope Francis correctly expresses that

“We are faced not with two separate crises: one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental. Strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded and at the same time protecting nature” (Laudato Si, Para.139). Pope also adds that “The concept of integral ecology helps us to open our eyes to see these connections and invites us to make an ecological conversion. Through integral ecology, we can begin to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor” (Laudato Si, Para. 49).

Women integrate multiple ecologies: social, environmental, cultural, and economic in their daily lives which is called human ecology. By living an exemplary life of utilizing the resources of nature conservatively, women teach the same to their fellow beings. Considering all factors, Integral ecology is a holistic picture of reality. Therefore, “the cry of the earth and cry of the poor” can be changed into “Joy of the earth and joy of the poor” by the effective leadership of women. Here is a vivid example of the above statement.

Rosalie Barrow Edge was such a ferocious advocate for the protection of wildlife that the people of New York fondly called her “the only honest, unselfish, indomitable hellcat in the history of conservation.”³ In the 1920s, Edge was appalled to discover that 70,000 bald eagles were being slaughtered in the Alaskan Territory, but that existing conservation groups didn’t care because bald eagles weren’t rare at the time. She founded the Emergency Conservation Committee, which was dedicated in protecting all species of birds and animals, common and rare alike, in 1929. She also ended decades of hawk and eagle shootings on a ridge in the Appalachian Mountains — by buying the property in 1934 and turning it into the world’s first refuge for birds of prey. Her leadership changed the cry of the earth into the joy of the earth.

This becomes true in Francis opinion how inseparable bond is between concern for nature, justice for the poor, commitment to society, and interior peace (Laudato Si, para. 10) Important Role of Women’s leadership in Environmental Conservation. Women should be empowered to maintain ecological balance worldwide. I analyze that time and cultures are important factors that control women’s empowerment. Women’s leadership in society may persuade the development of women empowerment, Women’s leadership should emphasize women’s empowerment by conducting awareness programs to find new paths to grow, evaluate and implement new plans for the sustainable development of the world. As Pope Francis is highlighting integral ecology in Laudato Si, I questioned how he is relating the term Integral to human existence and why modern women are fretful about the degradation of the environment. Pope requests us to become open to categories that take one to the heart of what it is to be human (Laudato Si, Para. 11). Women are integral or central to that heart! And women’s leadership is a wonderful fit into take care of the environmental issues concerning the areas of governance.

Pope Francis calls for an ecological conversion that entails a holistic and comprehensive approach to healing a broken world. We cannot have any action plan to develop and conserve natural resources and protect the environment without the involvement of women’s leadership. In the olden days, women were not given any role

in environmental conservation. But these days many women are coming forward to save natural resources to the extent of sacrificing their lives to keep up the justice of environmental ethics.

MARGARET THOMAS MURIE

In 1956, Margaret Thomas Murie (1902 - 2003) and her husband started a campaign to protect some of Alaska's at-risk natural territory. "She is called as the grandmother of the conservation movement."⁴ With the help of U.S. Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas, they convinced President Dwight Eisenhower to set aside 8 million acres as the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Three decades later, she worked on the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act, which doubled the size of the refuge. In between, she was instrumental in passing the Wilderness Act, which officially defined wilderness areas, and created the National Wilderness Preservation System, which today protects over 100 million acres. For her work, Murie was honored with the Audubon Medal and the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

If everything is related, then the health of society institutions has consequences for the environment and the quality of human life. Every violation of solidarity and civic friendship harms the environment; In this sense, social ecology is necessarily institutional and gradually extends to the whole of society, from the primary social group, the family, to the wider local, national, and international communities" (LS 142). It is an undeniable fact that women play a major role in environmental conservation. Women have a close connection with nature and they are the most affected ones due to environmental issues. Thus women have a wider knowledge of the environment. They are the guardian of the planet. We can find a concrete example of the above statement in the life of a Kenyan environmentalist.

WANGARI MAATHAI (1940 - 2011)

She had a new perspective on both the environmental damage in her country and the need for women's rights. She founded the Green Belt Movement to tackle both, by teaching Kenyan women how to plant new trees in deforested areas and sustainably draw income from the land. Since then, the Movement has trained 30,000 women in trades to raise them out of poverty and planted over 51 million trees. "For her dedication to both environmental conservation and the advancement of women's rights, Maathai received the Nobel Peace Prize in 2004 — the first African woman ever to receive the award."⁵

Women are working hard to protect the environment and all of the creatures which share our planet. As it is well said by Pope Francis "Mary, the Mother who cared for Jesus, now cares with maternal affection and pain for this wounded world....she grieves for the sufferings of the crucified poor and the creatures of the world laid waste by human power"(Laudato Si, Para. 241) Many women leaders changed the way that we see the world and our role in protecting it. Similarly, these women have expressed that we affect the care of our common home – Mother the Earth: from the process of choosing our day-to-day lives events to international policy, women and leadership can make a difference.

GRETA THUNBERG (2003)

Swedish teenager Greta Thunberg is leading a new generation of environmental activists. In 2018, at the age of 16, Greta founded the skolstrejk for climate (school strike for climate) movement after learning about the dangers posed by climate change. "My classmates were concerned when they watched the film, but when it stopped, they started thinking about other things, she recalls. I couldn't do that Some people can just let things go, but I can't."

Greta started protesting outside the Swedish parliament every Friday to demand action; slowly, her peers joined her, first locally, then around the world. Although Greta faces online bullying over her appearance, her

diagnosis of Asperger's syndrome, and more, she is also winning accolades around the globe, including being nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize. Now, she hopes adults will follow their lead: "We are asking grownups to follow our lead: we can't wait any longer," she wrote that "This movement had to happen. And now, your adults have a choice."⁶

According to Pope Francis, "Such an integrated approach to understanding ecology requires dialogue between multiple sectors at multiple levels. We need to seek out conversations and partnerships with people and organizations that utilize our expertise and pursue aims that may be unfamiliar or strange to us. We need to listen to each other with humility and a sense of openness to a bigger picture of reality. (Laudato Si, para.138). Though the Government of India is working toward an environmentally sustainable life, the issues are complicated. Thus women in India are playing a crucial role in the conservation of the environment.

Indian Women have brought a different perception to the environment dialogue, because of their different experience base. Poor women in our country have brought a different perspective to the environmental dialogue, because of their practical experience. Poor women are affected in many ways. They do understand that everything is interconnected. Their experience reveals to them that soil water and vegetation, necessary for their day-to-day living, require care and good management. Environmental degradation is related not only to the biosphere alone but to the social sphere as well.

Keeping in view the inherent capabilities of women in various areas, they need to be strengthened throughout the country. To achieve this, the resources and strength of women need to be channelized to develop their full potential to take their equal part in all areas.

MARTYR AMRITA DEVI

I can say another concrete example that happened in India in 1906. Chipko movement is one of the first environmentalist movements which were inspired by women (Women tree-huggers in India). The movement was an act of defiance against the state government's permission given to a corporation for commercial logging. Women of the village resisted, embracing trees to prevent their trees from falling, and to safeguard their lifestyles which were dependent on the forests. Deforestation could qualitatively change the lives of all village residents but it was the women who agitated for saving the forests. Organized by a non-governmental organization that Chandi Prasad led, The Chipko movement adopted the slogan "ecology is the permanent economy." The women embracing the trees did not tag their action as feminist activism; however, as a movement that demonstrated resistance against oppression, it had all the markings of such.

It began when the Maharaja of Jodhpur wanted to build a new palace in Rajasthan which is in Himalayan foothills. While the ax men were cutting the trees, martyr Amrita Devi hugged one of the trees. This is because in Jodhpur each child had a tree that could talk to it. The ax men ignored Devi and after taking her off they cut down the tree. Environmental education is required for every citizen, especially for every woman for sustainable development. As Pope says that every violation of solidarity and civic friendship harms the environment. "In this sense, social ecology is necessarily institutional and gradually extends to the whole of society, from the primary social group, the family, to the wider local, national, and international communities" (LS142).

As women are just, hard-working, and genuinely strong, they are ready to love and serve in great humility to humanity. So that we can proudly say that women are the custodian of the universe. They always teach us how to take care of the earth and inspire us to work with generosity and tenderness in protecting this world that God has handed over to us. Women are ready to shoulder their grave responsibility of saving the world from selfish human beings. Women should be encouraged to participate in decision-making, committees on environmental protection public works, and awareness programs. The government should make effort to make sure gender equity regarding the control of resources.

CONCLUSION

The important role of Women's leadership in environmental conservation is explained in this paper. I have discussed in this paper women have participated actively in environmental protection in diverse ways and saving natural resources to ensure sustainable use of environmental resources. It can help to attain the goal of women's empowerment. The critical role of women, as resource managers, community activists, and environmental advocates, must be accepted when strategies for the protection of the environment are being developed. Women should be allowed to participate at the local, regional, national, and international levels in environmental policymaking. Women should work on the possibilities to solve environmental problems. For generations, women have served as Environmental Educators. They have proved instrumental in building bridges rather than walls by solving several environmental problems.

REFERENCES

1. Drucker. P., *The Essential Drucker* (New York: Harper-Collins, 2001), 7.
2. The martyrs of social movement:
3. https://www.jatland.com/home/Category:The_Martyrs_of_Social_Movement
4. Jeanette Winter, *House on fire*, Greta Thunberg's call to save the planet.
5. Mama Miti, Wangari Maathai and the trees of Kenya.
6. Margaret E. Murie, *Two in the far North*
7. *Out of School and Into Nature: The Anna Comstock Story*.
8. Rosalie Barrow Edge, *Hawk of Mercy*.