

Impact of Present Environment on the Health of Modern Urban Women : A Study

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Human beings are at the centre of concern for sustainable development. They are entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature. Women have an essential role to play in the development of sustainable and ecological sound consumption and production patterns and approaches to natural resource management. Awareness of resource depletion, the degradation of natural systems and the dangers of polluting substances has increased markedly in the past decade. These worsening conditions are destroying the fragile ecosystems and displacing communities, especially women from productive activities and are an increasing threat.

While poverty results in certain kinds of environmental stress, the major cause of the continued deterioration of the global environment is the unsustainable pattern of consumption and production, particularly in industrialized countries. Environmental risk at home and work place may have profound impact on women's health because of their susceptibilities to the toxic effects of various chemicals. These risks to women's health are particularly high in urban areas as well as in low income areas where there is a high concentration of polluting industrial facilities.

Poor Maternal Health Care :

Women being the secondary citizens in the eyes of society, their reproductive health is the

neglected lot. In our male dominated society women become vulnerable to chores of diseases like AIDS, abortion, problems of child birth, side-effects of contraception and so on.

The high incidence of depression, anxiety, neurosis, psychosomatic disorder, increasing rate of suicides among women clearly shows that in keeping of the projections of World Mental Health Report this is emerging as a major cause of morbidity.

A recent study reflects;

Status of Women in India

Infant mortality rate	: 75/1000 live births
Maternal mortality rate	: 570/100,000 live births
Female literacy	- 58%
Female school enrolment	- 47%
Earned income by females	- 26%
Underweight children	- 53%
Total fertility rate	- 3.4%
Women in government	- 6%
Contraception usage	- 44%
Low birth weight babies	- 33%
Women in domestic work	- 98%
Women in unpaid work	- 60%
Anaemia in pregnant women-	50-90%

Source : V Shanthi and N. Raja - Lakshmi, "Women and Environment", an article published in *Empowerment of Women and Ecological Development*, ed, A. Ranga Reddy, New Delhi, Serials Publications, 2002, p.512.

Modernisation of Kitchen is a boon for the working women but at the same time it becomes a set-back in the long run. The modern gadgets such as washing machine, grinders, mixies, computers and robots set relief for women between the domestic chores and official duties but ultimately make women medically unfit.

The relaxation rendered by the modern gadgets also forces women to seek for a job to make use of the partly available time. Proper training and education is needed for modern women to remain healthy.

Modern urban women encounter newer problems with the changing environment. Transgenic plants and synthetic chemicals for pest management and food preservatives enter into the market before being validated for their ecological acceptance. Drugs and injections used for family planning are sometimes introduced without proper experiment. Working women depend more on readymade food and have lost control over their own traditional skill. The congested dwellings and inadequate sanitary facilities make cities breeding ground for various ailments. The various chemicals sprayed as controlling agents and effluent from industries and hospital wastes wipe out the immunity in the already emaciated women.

The cellphone menace, micro-oven, X-rays and sonography etc. have both positive and negative aspects. In-Vitro fertilization and Caesarian operations help women to become a proud mother. At the same time mankind becomes more dependable on the artificial intervention, which is against, nature's choice. Human rights relating to the environment are set out in basic human rights treaties and include the human right

to safe and healthy environment, the human right to highest attainable standard of health and the human right to ecologically sustainable development etc. Women and environment is the main concern of all human rights treaties.

Working Environment of Women and Gender Inequality :

It has been found that more than 90% of women are engaged in the unorganized sector. The labour force in this sector is characterized by high incidence of casual labour, low wages at very uneconomical return. They work under unsatisfactory working conditions with occupational health hazards.

In almost every country women are poor and less educated than the male folk and enjoy fewer legal and political rights. This inequality has greater consequences for any effort to reduce poverty and environmental degradation. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Human Development Report (HRD) for the year 2003 focused on gender disparities in development. Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) determine the basic idea of measurement of women in development which include the following : (1) Per capita income does not reflect women's access to resources. (2) Economic empowerment of female work force in India based on share in profession; managerial and technical lines. (3) Political empowerment of women based on scheme of parliamentary seats. The inference corroborates the government's women reservation policy which needs to be implemented with letter and spirit.

Conclusion

The historical mainstay of agro-ecological systems have been women. Women provide sustenance to family and community by their

judicious use and management of natural resources. Women as consumers, producers, educators and caretakers of their families play a crucial role for sustainable ecosystem for the present and future. In both rural and urban area, environmental deterioration imposes negative effect on the health and quality of life especially of girls and women. The policy of conservation of natural resources will be successful only if women are integrated in eco-friendly programmes and policy making.

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MINORITIES LOAN SCHEME

The Orissa Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes Development Finance Co-operative Corporation Limited is implementing various economic development scheme for uplift of poor belonging to minority Communities.

During the year 2004-05, 32 beneficiaries have been given loan assistance to the tune of Rs.30.12 lakhs, as per the source of ST/SC Development Department, Government of Orissa.