

Chapter 9

Role of Women Leaders to Deal With Environmental Crisis: Failure and Success

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ABSTRACT

Human consciousness is the pre-requisite for equality and equality postulates the involvement of women leadership in the environment in every sphere. Though the 21st century is characterized as the century of globalization and new technology and we have witnessed science and technology grow by leaps and bounds, the gender disparity in society persists till date. The spirit of patriarchal mindset seems to be looming over society at large which makes it difficult for women to come out as the frontrunners. Hence, the major challenge women face as leaders is primarily of getting the recognition as a leader. In this chapter the socio-political thoughts of the state and society, the perception about women leaders would be explored with a comparative aspect to understand that whether the challenges women face in environmental management are different from the challenges they must face in other spheres. Further, the chapter would explore the role and success of women leaders in environmental management to educate and train the society about environmental concerns.

INTRODUCTION

Human evolution has not only led to physical changes but also transformed human thoughts and attitudes. This transformation is reflected in the shift from an age of divine rule to an era of democracy, where 'individual will' guides human life. The Age of Enlightenment played a significant role in securing individual rights and promoting rationality, equality, liberty, and justice. Democracy has become the

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defining feature of modern governments. However, challenges like widespread illiteracy persist, limiting people's understanding of political and social issues. This issue was highlighted during the Brexit referendum by biologist Richard Dawkins, who argued against letting uninformed individuals make complex decisions. He states "You might as well call a nationwide plebiscite to decide whether Einstein got his algebra right, or let passengers vote on which runway the pilot should land." (Dawkins, 2017, p. 1). To this argument Yuval Noah Harari responded by saying that for democracy feelings are more important than what one thinks. Human feelings reflect free will and this "free will is the ultimate source of authority, and that while some people are more intelligent than others, all humans are equally free" (Harari, 2019, p. 3). If rationality were the sole criteria for running a successful democracy, it would likely lead to the dominance of elites, silencing the common people. Rationality is effective if we have all necessary facts and analytical abilities.

However, overreliance on rationality while neglecting emotions like compassion and empathy has contributed to issues like global warming. The pursuit of economic and scientific progress often came at the expense of the environment. Early warnings of environmental catastrophes were often dismissed. Steven Pinker shares this perspective, suggesting that environmental concerns may be exaggerated, and renewable energy sources can support scientific advancement without harming the environment. He proposes in his book *Enlightenment Now* that science and technology have the solution to every problem that humankind faces and if currently there aren't any there is a high probability of developing them in the future (Pinker, 2018). Indeed, his hypothesis is quite an optimistic one but when we observe environmental catastrophe in the form of: heat waves, floods, earthquakes, tsunamis, cyclones on regular intervals there stands much reason for us to raise question on such optimism.

In the recent years the world has seen an escalating impact of environmental crisis such as global warming, biodiversity loss, pollution and deforestation. Addressing these challenges requires effective leadership and efforts from society to tackle these emerging issues in the economy. This chapter explores the role of women leadership in dealing with environment crises and examining their failures and successes. Women have made significant contributions to the environmental movement, policy making and sustainable goals and practices. With these contribution to the diverse sectors they have also faced obstacles in their efforts. By exploring both the sides of the coins we can gain a deeper knowledge (Mies & Shiva, 1993).

The chapter discusses the achievements of women leaders in environmental conservation and sustainability, highlighting their strategies and accomplishments. It emphasizes the importance of women's leadership in fostering community engagement for environmental management. However, it also acknowledges the challenges and limitations these leaders face, including systemic barriers. The chapter underscores the need to address these gaps and support women leaders. It explores how women leaders from diverse backgrounds identify environmental issues and how their experiences can inform more effective strategies, policies, and support systems for dealing with environmental crises and building a sustainable and equitable world.

RISE OF WOMEN AS LEADERS

Women have had always played a key figure in maintaining and nurturing the role of family and marriage however, that's not their sole contribution to the civilizations. Upon studying history, one can also find that women have consistently demonstrated their exceptional capacity to stimulate innovation, encourage

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