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## ROLE OF RURAL WOMEN IN BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION

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### **Abstract**

India is a country which majorly focuses on biodiversity conservation in urban as well as in rural areas. Women's living in rural areas plays an important role in conservation of biodiversity by performing different activities.

Animal husbandry and agriculture are the two major fields where Rural women can showed their efficient labour and works hardly. Animal husbandry includes cattle farming, poultry farming, fish farming, bee keeping etc. Which provides the useful household materials (milk, honey, cheese, butter, chicken, cow dung etc.). In rural areas cow dung is used as a green manure for agriculture and as a fuel in the form of biogas which helps to prevent pollution. It increases the crop yield and also protects microorganisms from chemical fertilizers present in soil. Agricultural lands and forest not only provides us oxygen, timber, food for well being but also gave shelter to various birds, animals and living creatures.

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Hence rural women worked as a farmer, cultivators, seed preserver and conserve all the varieties of food, timber plants, livestock, microorganisms which provides us a healthy ecosystem and a great environment.

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**Keywords**

Biodiversity, rural, livestock, pollution, fertilizers.

**Introduction**

**B**iodiversity means different forms of life present on Earth and it's interaction with other species. In the developing world, women are often the main custodian of biodiversity resources<sup>1</sup>. According to a 2013 UN Environment publication, Biodiversity for the well being of women, "women provide almost 80% of total wild vegetable food."

Agricultural development is the most important and primary source of income for almost 70% of India's households. Almost 80% of women are totally depend on agricultural development in rural India where they contribute as a labour force, as a cultivators and as a seed preserver<sup>2</sup>.

Rural women are also engaged in animal husbandry which includes livestock rearing, cattle management, poultry farming, fish farming, bee keeping etc. which provides us useful household materials like milk, cheese, butter, honey, cow dung etc. from which cow dung is a very useful material and is used in different ways. It is used as a green manure for agriculture as a fertilizer and as a fuel in the form of biogas which reduces the pollution. It increases the yield of crops and save micro organisms from harmful chemical fertilizers. In rural areas, cow dung is also used as a floor and wall coating which signifies the purity of house and prevent from insects. Agricultural lands and forest provides us enormous amount of oxygen, timber, different types of food materials and also gave shelter<sup>2</sup> to various species of birds, animals and microorganisms present in soil.

### Materials and Methods

The present study is based on extensive literature search and relevance of different practices which are adapted by rural women in various regions of India for the conservation of biodiversity. Women of the Rular areas are managers of biodiversity [4] and their knowledge is very important for food security, health and the general well being

### Observations and Discussion

Following observations show the important role of rural women in Biodiversity conservation.

1. Various movement were run by rural women for the conservation of biodiversity.

(a) Chipko movement by Gaura Devi was a forest conservation movement led by a huge mass participation of rural women in 1970, to prevent forest in Chamoli, Uttarakhand.

(b) Bishnoi movement headed by women Amrita Devi in late 18th century in which various women sacrificed their life to prevent the Khejari plants in Khejari village, Rajasthan.

(c) Vasantha Sena movement by Vasantha Sena in 1810 was a organisation of women in Periyar Tiger Reserve, which was made to protect and conserve nature in Kerala. This organisation conserve the sandalwood forest therefore termed as 'Green Army'.

(d) Bold conservation movement by women of Odisha in 2000. The great success of this movement is the 'Sata Bhai' hill which is once again alive after converting into complete barren land.

2. In agriculture, rural women plant different varieties of plants which provides various sources of food(cereals, vegetables, pulses, fruits, etc), and medicinal plants(Tulsi, mint, arand, bhang,etc.) which is beneficial for all living beings.

3. Animal husbandry helps rural women in the proper maintenance of animals by providing them proper food, water, fodder, caring for newborns, shelter and protection against diseases to sick animals which reflects the caring and dedicated nature of women to conserve the resources.

### **Conclusion**

India, our country has a rich value of biodiversity, as compared to male workers, rural women are more likely to work in livestock and agricultural production. They helped to conserve different varieties of flora and fauna present in India for the continuation of life. Rural women are the true guardian[5] of biodiversity as discussed in this paper. They played a different roles as seed preserver, fodder collectors[3], cultivators, livestock managers, biomass producer, etc. and helps in balancing the ecosystem. Their caring and dedicated nature made the environment green and clean.

### **Data Accessibility:**

All the data were obtained from previously published work available via references and from the international and national articles and research papers.

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