

# Gender and Environmental Justice: An Intersectional Analysis

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**Abstract**

The paper explores the connection between gender and environmental justice, highlighting how women and other marginalised genders are disproportionately affected by environmental degradation. It looks at the fundamental inequalities that lead to these differences and provides a framework for resolving them via including laws and processes. The paper highlights the significance of gender-responsive approaches to attaining sustainable development and equal environmental results by drawing on case studies, academic assessments, and international efforts. Examining the relationship between gender and environmental justice in India, this study shows the far greater effect that environmental harm has on women, particularly in rural areas. It highlights the gendered impacts of climate change, women's involvement in environmental movements, and the importance of including gender perspectives in environmental laws. The paper uses case studies like the Chipko Movement and the Narmada Bachao Andolan to highlight the importance for sustainable development strategies and equitable governance. The findings emphasise the need for broad strategies that address gender inequality and environmental challenges in order to achieve social justice and durability. The study evaluates India's legal and policy frameworks, focusing on gender-responsive approaches and sustainable development. It emphasizes intersectional approaches, including global examples like climate resilience and Indigenous women's activism, and supports policies prioritizing gender equity for environmental justice and a just future.

**Key Words** - Gender, Race, Class, Systemic Inequalities, Climate Change, Empowerment

**Introduction**

A framework known as environmental justice aims to correct the unequal distribution of environmental, and responsibilities across various communities. Since women are frequently disproportionately impacted by damage to the environment and climate change, particularly in disadvantaged and rural communities, gender plays a crucial role in creating these inequalities. With a focus on structural inequalities, the gendered effects of environmental issues, and methods for obtaining gender-appropriate solutions, this essay explores the connections between gender and environmental justice. Gender-based and ecological inequality have long been problems in India. These two forms of injustice are intertwined and form a complex web that disproportionately impacts marginalised groups, including women. It is hard to completely understand this confluence without examining it and resolving the challenges posed by the overlapping efforts. It is difficult to fully understand India's struggle for equality without examining the combination and addressing the challenges posed by the overlapping efforts.

**Environmental damage and inequalities between genders**

In India, women are frequently the major carers and managers of natural resources including food, fuel, and water, especially in rural areas. Because of their close ties to the environment, they are particularly susceptible to ecological degradation. Climate change, water scarcity, and deforestation directly affect women, making their struggles worse and adding to their responsibilities.

For example, women are forced to walk farther to get water in drought-prone areas, which causes physical tiredness and limits their time for education or activities that provide earnings. The urgency of incorporating gender views into environmental strategies is underscored by these gendered experiences of environmental disasters.

### **Women-Led Environmental Movements**

Important environmental movements led by women have emerged in India, highlighting the link between gender justice and protecting the environment. One of the best examples of women hugging trees to stop deforestation is the Chipko Movement (1973) in Uttarakhand, which represented their struggle for communal existence and ecological preservation.

In a similar vein, Medha Patkar's Narmada Bachao Andolan opposed massive dams that uprooted native populations and ruined ecosystems. These campaigns demonstrate how the protection of rights and livelihoods, particularly for disadvantaged women, is frequently at the heart of environmental fights.

### **The Effects of Climate Change on Gender**

Gender inequities already present are made worse by climate change. Women are particularly impacted by rising temperatures, unpredictable rainfall, and natural disasters since they are frequently responsible for obtaining fuel, food, and water. Women are more likely to experience economic instability, violence, and displacement in coastal communities that are prone to flooding and cyclones.

Women also have difficulty accessing resources, knowledge, and decision-making platforms, which hinders their capacity to adjust to climate problems. Therefore, gender-sensitive policies are necessary to ensure equitable solutions in the fight against climate change.

### **Policy Interventions and the Legal Framework**

Through its legal frameworks and policies, India has made significant progress in recognising environmental justice and gender equality. The Environment Protection Act (1986) and the National Policy for Empowerment of Women (2001) offer fundamental instruments for tackling these problems. There are still implementation and enforcement gaps, nevertheless.

The goals of initiatives like the Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana (MKSP) are to lessen gender inequality in rural economies, empower women farmers, and encourage sustainable farming methods. In order to close the gap and establish inclusive development models, more such projects are required.

### **Moving For the future: A Balanced Strategy**

Gender equity and environmental sustainability must be combined in an integrated strategy to achieve equality. Important actions consist of:

1. Encouraging female involvement in environmental governance and decision-making.
2. Expanding access to training and education initiatives that emphasise sustainable practices and climate resilience.
3. Encouraging grassroots initiatives and giving local communities the tools they need to tackle gender and environmental issues.
4. Putting in place gender-responsive policies and budgeting to guarantee fair resource allocation.

### **Environmental Justice and Systemic Inequalities**

#### **Division of Labour by Gender**

In many communities, women are primarily responsible for subsistence gardening, firewood gathering, and water collection. They run the risk of environmental hazards like water scarcity, deforestation, and climate-related calamities because of their hard work. According to Agarwal "the gendered division of labour in rural areas often places women in closer interaction with natural resources, making them more vulnerable to environmental changes" (Agarwal 164).

#### **Control of Resources and Land Ownership**

Land ownership and decision-making authority over natural resources are often inaccessible to women. According to the FAO, women own fewer than 20% of the world's land, while making substantial contributions to agricultural production. Their capacity to support sustainable practices and adjust to changes in the environment is hampered by this discrepancy.

#### **Vulnerability and Intersectionality**

Vulnerabilities are increased when gender interacts with race, class, and other social identities. For example, Indigenous women are especially vulnerable to the effects of resource extraction and environmental degradation because they frequently experience compounding prejudice (Smith 57).

#### **Environmental Challenges' Effects on Gender**

Changes in Climate Because of their socioeconomic roles and restricted access to resources, women are disproportionately affected by climate change. The gendered dimension of climate-induced displacement is highlighted by the fact that women in Bangladesh frequently lose their houses and means of subsistence during floods first (Neumayer and Plumper 693). Health Hazards Women and children are disproportionately affected by environmental pollution and poor sanitation. For

instance, one of the main causes of respiratory illnesses in women in developing nations is indoor air pollution from cooking with biomass fuels (WHO).

### **Natural Disasters**

Women are more affected by natural catastrophes, which are made worse by climate change. They frequently experience a spike in domestic abuse and have less mobility during emergencies. According to Enarson and Chakrabarti, “disaster response policies frequently fail to consider women’s unique needs and vulnerabilities, leading to inadequate support and recovery efforts” (Enarson and Chakrabarti 104).

Techniques for Gender-Responsive Governance and Policy in Environmental Justice Addressing gender inequities in environmental justice requires inclusive policies. The goal of programs like the UN’s Gender Action Plan is to incorporate gender viewpoints into environmental governance and climate action. These regulations guarantee fair access to resources and place a strong emphasis on women’s leadership in decision-making.

### **Education and Empowerment**

Gender-sensitive education and capacity-building programs can empower women to become agents of environmental change. For instance, grassroots movements like the Chipko Movement in India demonstrate how women’s collective action can protect natural resources and challenge exploitative practices (Shiva 78).

### **Financial Support**

Women can adopt sustainable behaviours and build sensitivity against environmental shocks by receiving financial resources like grants and microcredit. In India, initiatives like SEWA have demonstrated success in fostering environmental sustainability and economic women’s empowerment (Jain 89)

### **Examples of Cases**

#### **The Movement of Chipko**

One potent illustration of women’s leadership in environmental advocacy is the Chipko Movement in India. In Uttarakhand, rural women banded together to stop deforestation, highlighting how important woods are to both the ecosystem and their means of subsistence (Shiva 82).

#### **Climate Resilience and Bangladesh**

In Bangladesh, women’s organisations have been instrumental in promoting climate resilience and disaster preparedness. They have created creative ways to reduce the risk of flooding through community-based projects, like elevated houses and floating gardens (Huq et al. 112).

#### **Native American Women’s Support**

Globally, environmental justice movements have been led by indigenous women. The Idle No More campaign in Canada emphasises how Indigenous women have taken the lead in defending their rights to land and water (Simpson 120).

### **Methodology**

This study merges knowledge from academic literature, case studies, policy analysis, and international frameworks to investigate the relationship between gender and environmental justice using a qualitative, multidisciplinary method.

### **Review of Literature**

This study is based on a thorough analysis of previous scholarly research, papers, and policy documents. Works by Shiva (1988) on women’s environmental activism, Agarwal (1992) on gender and resource management, and FAO studies on land ownership inequities are important sources.

### **Examples of Cases**

Case studies are used in the research to highlight the importance of women in environmental movements and the gendered effects of environmental deterioration. Among the examples are:

An examination of women’s leadership in Uttarakhand’s forest protection during the Chipko Movement (1973). Examining opposition to major dam projects and their socio-environmental effects is the focus of Narmada Bachao Andolan.

### **Analysis of Intersections**

In order to understand how gender interact with other identities, including class and race, to increase susceptibilities to environmental damage, the study uses an intersectional lens. Enarson and Chakrabarti’s (2009) investigation of disaster vulnerabilities and Neumayer and Plumper’s (2007) research of the gendered effects of climate change are cited.

### **Information Gathering**

To bolster conclusions and suggestions, secondary data from official publications, global organizations (such as the WHO and FAO), and community-based projects are examined.

## Conclusion

Because gender and environmental justice are closely related, addressing systemic injustices and ensuring fair results necessitates an intersectional approach. We can create a more equitable and sustainable future by strengthening marginalised groups, encouraging inclusive decision-making, and incorporating gender perspectives into environmental policies. The significance of putting gender front and centre in the fight for environmental justice is shown by the case studies and tactics covered in this article. In India, the relationship between gender and environmental justice draws attention to the two challenges marginalised groups—women in particular—face in their pursuit of equality. Social justice and sustainable development depend on identifying and resolving these interrelated problems. India can set the path for a more resilient and equitable future by implementing gender-sensitive tactics, inclusive policies, and grassroots initiatives.

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## Conflicts of interest

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