

TOPIC: -
ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENTS-
CHIPKO ANDOLAN, NARMADA ANDOLAN.

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INTRODUCTION: -

The environment comprises of all the natural resources such as air water, land, forests, and minerals. It is our duty to protect the natural resources. Nonetheless, due to technical advancement and other reasons, there is rampant misuse of these natural resources, leading to land degradation, water pollution, air pollution, and deforestation. All these factors lead to worsening of environment. Efforts are being made by the Government through legislation, NGOs through awareness and mass mobilization and individuals in order to regain the environment. There are cases where people have revoked and adopted non-violent movements to protect their environment (Arne Kalland, Gerard Persoon, 2013).

ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENTS:-

An environmental movement can be defined as a social or political movement, for the conservation of environment or for the improvement of the state of the environment. The terms 'green movement' or 'conservation movement' is alternatively used to denote the same. The environmental movements favor the sustainable management of natural resources. The movements often stress the protection of the environment through

changes in public policy. Many movements are centered on ecology, health and human rights. Environmental movements range from the highly organized and formally institutionalized ones to the radically informal activities. The spatial scope of various environmental movements ranges from being local to the global.

Guha and Gadgil (1989) defined the environmental movements as 'organized social activity consciously directed towards promoting sustainable use of natural resources halting environmental degradation or bringing about environmental restoration'

Yanki Tong defined environmental movement as a type of “social movement that involves an array of individuals, groups and coalitions that perceive a common interest in environmental protection and act to bring about changes in environmental policies and practices”.

“The environmental movements are conceived as broad networks of people and organizations engaged in collective action in the pursuit of environmental benefits. Environmental movements are understood to be very diverse and complex, their organizational forms ranging from the highly organized and formally institutionalized to the radically informal, the spatial scope of their activities ranging from the local to the almost global, the nature of their concerns ranging from single issue to the full panoply of global environmental concerns. Such an inclusive conception is consistent with the usage of the term amongst environmental activists themselves and enables us to consider the linkages between the several levels and forms of what activists call ‘the environmental movement (Christopher: 1999: 2).

The environmental movement is global movement, signified by a range of organizations, from the large to grassroots and differs from country to country. Due to its large membership, varying and strong politics, and occasionally theoretical nature, the environmental movement is not always amalgamated in its goals. The movement also includes some other movements with a more specific focus, such as the climate movement. Broadly speaking, the movement includes private citizens, professionals, religious devotees, politicians, scientists, non-profit organizations and individual advocates.

ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENTS IN INDIA:-

The concern for environmental protection in India can be traced back to the beginning of twentieth century when people demonstrated against the commercialization of forest resources during the Colonial period (Sahu, Geetanjoy 2007). In Indian context, large number of environmental movements has emerged especially after 1970s and 1980s. In this framework Sahu, Geetanjoy (2007) stated that:

“In India, the environmental movement has grown rapidly over the last three to four decades. It has played a key role in three areas such i.e.

1. creating public awareness about the importance of bringing about a balance between environment and development.
2. opposing developmental projects that are inimical to social and environmental concerns.
3. organizing model projects that show the way forward towards non-bureaucratic and participatory, community-based natural resource management systems.

As per Sharma, Aviram (2007) major reasons of the emergence of environmental movements in India are 1. Control over natural resources 2. False developmental policies of the government 3. Socioeconomic reasons 4. Environmental degradation/ destruction and lastly spread of environmental awareness and media.

MAIN ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENTS IN INDIA:-

The main environmental movements in India are as under:

- Chipko Andolan,
- Narmada Dam Andolan
- Silent Valley Movement

THE CHIPKO MOVEMENT:-

- **Year:** 1973
- **Place:** In Chamoli district and later at Tehri-Garhwal district of Uttarakhand.
- **Leaders:** Sundarlal Bahuguna, Gaura Devi, Sudesha Devi, Bachni Devi, Chandi Prasad Bhatt, Govind Singh Rawat, Dhoom Singh Negi, Shamsheer Singh Bisht and Ghanasyam Raturi.

- **Aim:** The main objective was to protect the trees on the Himalayan slopes from the axes of contractors of the forest.

The most effectual and popular environmental movement in India was the Chipko which became known for environmental movements in world. The name of the movement, that is 'Chipko', comes from the word 'embrace', in Hindi. It is locally known as “Angwal”. It is believed that the villagers hugged or embraced or stuck to the trees in the forest to avert them from being felled by the contractors. The strategy of 'embracing'



the trees to resist the felling of the trees was

thought of by Chandi Prasad Bhatt in a meeting in the Mandal on April 1, 1973. The Chipko movement concentrated world attention on the environmental problems of the Alaknanda catchment area in the mid-Western Himalayas (Santra, S. C. 2009). It was started by noted environmentalist **Sunderlal Bahuguna** in 1970's to safe guard the rich forest of western Himalaya Range. This movement was basically a people movement to resist the cutting of trees. There were frequent floods in the Alkanand River catchment area due to cutting trees for developmental world like the construction of roads, river dam

project etc. However, the original 'Chipko movement' was started around 260 years back in the early part of the 18th century in Rajasthan by Bishnoi community. A large group of them from 84 villages led by a lady called Amrita Devi laid down their lives in an effort to protect the trees from being felled on the orders of the *Maharaja* (King) of Jodhpur. After this incident, the *maharaja* gave a strong royal decree preventing the cutting of trees in all Bishnoi villages.

The Chipko protests in Uttar Pradesh achieved a major victory in 1980 with a 15-year ban on green felling in the Himalayan forests of that state by the order of Mrs. Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India. Since then, the movement has spread to many states in the country. In addition to the 15-year ban in Uttar Pradesh, the movement has stopped felling in the Western Ghats and the Vindhya and has generated pressure for a natural resource policy that is more sensitive to people's needs and ecological requirements.

Some other persons have also been involved in this movement and have given it proper direction. Mr. Sunderlal Bahuguna, a Gandhian activist and philosopher, whose appeal to Mrs. Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India, resulted in the green-felling ban. Mr. Bahuguna coined the Chipko slogan: 'ecology is permanent economy'. Mr. Chandi Prasad Bhatt, is another leader of the Chipko movement. He encouraged the development of local industries based on the conservation and sustainable use of forest wealth for local benefit. Mr. Ghanasyam Raturi, the Chipko poet, whose songs echo throughout the Himalayas of Uttar Pradesh. The main demand of the people in these protests was that the benefits of the forests, especially the right to fodder, should go to local people" (Reddy, Ratna V. 1998). In this context Santra, (2000) recorded that in 1960, to maintain border security; a vast network of roads was constructed in this area besides taking up projects of various other types. All this was catastrophic for the forests and also total environment of the area chopping of trees and rolling them down hills loosened the upper soil which eroded further during rain. This had disastrous impact and resulting the devastating flood in the Alaknanda in July 1970, which caused destruction in the upper catchment area.

Reddy (1998) further stated that, "in early 1973, the forest department allotted ash trees to a private company. This incident provoked the Dasholi Gram Swarajya Sangha

(DGSS) a local cooperative organization to fight against this injustice through lying down in front of timber trucks and burning resin and timber depots as was done in the quit India movement. When these methods were found unsatisfactory, Chandi Prasad Bhat, one of the leaders, suggested embracing the trees to prevent them from being cut. With its success, the movement has spread to other neighboring areas, and then onwards the movement is popularly known internationally as Chipko movement (Reddy, Ratna V. 1998: 688)."

Karan (1994) indicated that "by the late 1980s, the movement had broken into two groups that have broad grassroots support and advocate participatory methods which respond to local issues in the context of local social and cultural traditions. One group followed a strategy that emphasizes ecologically sound development of forest by local people to meet local needs. The second group followed the deep-ecology paradigm of environmental management" (Karan, P. P. 1994).

Reddy, Ratna and Mukul (1998) indicated that, Chipko movement has had six demands, one of which is complete stoppage of commercial cutting of trees. The other demands include:

1. On the basis of minimum needs of the people, a reorganization of traditional rights should take place.
2. Arid forest should be made green with people's participation and increased tree cultivation.
3. Village committees should be formed to manage forests.
4. Forest related home-based industries should be developed and the raw materials, money and technique for it should be made available.
5. Based on local conditions and requirements, local varieties should be given priority in afforestation (Reddy, Ratna V. 1998).

NARMADA BACHAO ANDOLAN:-

- Year: 1985
- Place: Narmada River, which flows through the states of Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra.

- Leaders: Medha Patker, Baba Amte, adivasis, farmers, environmentalists and human rights activists.
- Aim: A social movement against a number of large dams being built across the Narmada River.

The most widespread movement in the environmental crusade of India is the movement against the Narmada River Valley Project (Reddy, Ratna V, 1998). Narmada Bachao Andolan is the most powerful mass movement, started in 1985, against the construction of huge dam on the Narmada river. Narmada is the India's largest west flowing river, which supports a large variety of people with distinguished culture and tradition ranging from the indigenous (Bhils and Gonds) people inhabited in the jungles here to the large number of rural population. The Narmada valley is the location of one of the world's largest versatile water projects. The Narmada River Development Project, which involves the construction of thirty large dams and many small ones on the river and its fifty-one main tributaries. The project renovated the valley and the lives of its residents and will increase food production and hydropower generation in Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, and Maharashtra. Karan (1994) inferred that more than twenty one million people live in the valley, mostly in villages. The proposed Sardar Sarovar Dam and Narmada Sagar wil. displace more than 250,000 people. The big fight is over the resettlement or the rehabilitation of these people. The two proposals are already under construction, supported by US\$550 million loan by the World Bank.



It is a multi-crore project that will generate a big revenue for the government. The Narmada Valley Development Plan is the most promised and most challenging plan in the history of India. The proponents are of the view that it will produce 1450 MW of electricity and pure drinking water to 40 million people covering thousands of villages and towns. Some of the dams have been already been completed such as Tawa and Barg Dams. But the opponent says that this hydro project will devastate human lives and biodiversity by destroying thousands of acres of forests and agricultural land. On the other hand it will overall deprive thousands of people of their livelihood. They believe that the water and energy could be provided to the people through alternative technological means, that would be ecologically beneficial.

Reddy (1998) stated that to start with, this movement was centred on the issue of human rights. The main leaders of the movement at present like Medha Patkar were working towards proper rehabilitation programmes for the dam displaced. Due to improper implementation of the rehabilitation programmes by the state, the human rights

activists have become the articulators of antidam protests. Their demands included complete stopping of the dam. The movement, however, gained huge public attention with mobilization and organization of oustees (mostly tribals) and the joining of the eminent social workers like Baba Amte, Sunderlal Bahuguna and Medha Patkar. Though, its public attention is due to its coverage in three states, the most distinguished feature of this movement is the international support it has received (Reddy, Ratna V. 1998). The strong protests throughout the country not only made impact on the local people but has also influenced the several famous celebrities like film star Aamir Khan, who has made open efforts to support Narmada Bachao Andolan. He said he only want that those who have been rendered homeless should be given a roof. He pleaded to the common people to take part in the moment and come up with the best possible solutions. The Narmada Bachao Andolan has been pressurizing the World Bank to withdraw its loan from the project through media. Nepal, Padam (2009) indicated that the Narmada Bachao Andolan has drawn upon a multiplicity of discourses for protests such as: "displacement risks and resettlement provisions; environmental impact and sustainability issues; financial implications of the project; forceful evictions and violations of civil liberties; issues pertaining to river valley planning and management; implications of Western growth model, and alternative development and appropriate technology among many other. The movement uses various tools of protest such as Satyagraha, Jal Samarpan, Rasta Roko, Gaon Bandh, demonstrations and rallies, hunger strikes and blockade of projects" (Nepal, Padam 2009).

SILENT VALLEY MOVEMENT: -

- Year: 1978
- Place: Silent Valley, an evergreen tropical forest in the Palakkad district of Kerala, India.
- Leaders: The Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad (KSSP) an NGO, and the poet activist Sughathakumari played an important role in the Silent Valley protests.
- Aim: Inorder to protect the Silent Valley, the moist evergreen forest from being destroyed by a hydroelectric project.

Save Silent Valley was a social movement aimed at the protection of Silent valley, an evergreen tropical forest in the Palakkad district of Kerala, India. It was started in 1973 to save the Silent Valley Reserve Forest in from being flooded by a hydroelectric project. The valley was declared as Silent Valley National Park in 1985.

Silent Valley in Kerala has a rich 89 sq. km biological treasure drove in the enormous expanse of tropical virgin forests on the green rolling hills. Kuntipuzha one of the major rivers takes its origin in the flush green forests of Silent valley. In 1928 the location at Sairandhrion, the Kunthipuzha River was identified as an ideal site for electricity generation. The Kerala State Electricity Board (KSEB) decided to implement the SilentValley Hydro-Electric Project (SVHEP) centered on a dam across the Kunthipuzha River in 1973. A study and survey was conducted in 1980 of the area about the possibility of a hydroelectric project of 200 MW and one costing Rs. 17 Crore. (Sheth, Pravin 1997).The resulting reservoir would have flood 8.3 km² of virgin rainforest. The proposed project was not also environmentally feasible, as it would drown a chunk of the valuable rainforest of the valley and threaten the life of a host of endangered species of both flora and fauna (Nepal, Padam 2009). The proposal was enquired by National Committee on Environmental Planning and Co-ordination (NCEPC) and suggested 17 safeguards to be implemented in case the project implemented. A shortage of funds delayed activity. Even then from 1974 to 1975 a very large number of trees were felled in the area. KSEB announced its plan to begin dam construction in 1973.

After the announcement of imminent dam construction, the valley became the focal point of "Save Silent Valley", India's fiercest environmental debate of the decade.

Because of concern



about the endangered lion-tailed macaque, the issue was brought to public attention. Romulus Whitaker, founder of the Madras Snake Park and the Madras Crocodile Bank, was probably the first person to draw public attention to the small and remote area. In 1977 the Kerala Forest Research Institute carried out an Ecological Impact study of the Silent Valley area and proposed that the area be declared a Biosphere Reserve. In 1978 Smt. Indira Gandhi, the Honorable Prime Minister of India, approved the project, with the condition that the State Government enact Legislation ensuring the necessary safeguards. Also that year the IUCN (Ashkhabad, USSR, 1978) passed a resolution recommending protection of Lion-tailed Macaques in Silent Valley and Kalakkad and the controversy heated up. In 1979 the Government of Kerala passed Legislation regarding the Silent Valley Protection Area (Protection of Ecological balance Act of 1979) and issued a notification declaring the exclusion of the Hydroelectric Project Area from the proposed National Park.

The Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad (KSSP) an NGO, was working for three decades among masses of Kerala for growing environmental awareness. Kerala Sasthra Sahithya Parishath (KSSP) effectively aroused public opinion on the requirement to save Silent Valley. They also published a Techno-economic and Socio-Political assessment report on the Silent Valley Hydroelectric project. The poet Activist Sugathakumari played an important role in the silent valley protest and her poem "Marathinu Stuthi"

(Ode to a Tree) became a symbol for the protest from the intellectual community and was the opening song/prayer of most of the "save the Silent Valley" campaign meetings. Dr. Salim Ali, eminent ornithologist of the Bombay Natural History Society, visited the Valley and appealed for cancellation of the Hydroelectric Project. A petition of writ was filed before the High Court of Kerala, against the clear cutting of forests in the Hydroelectric Project area and the court ordered a stop to the clear cutting. Dr. M.S. Swaminathan, the renowned Agricultural Scientist, and then Secretary to the Department of Agriculture, called at the Silent Valley region and his suggestion was 389.52 km² including the Silent Valley (89.52 km²), New Amarambalam (80 km²), Attappadi (120 km²) in Kerala and Kunda in Tamilnadu (100 km²) reserve forests, should be made into a National Rainforest Biosphere Reserve, with the aim of "preventing erosion of valuable genes from the area".

In January 1980 the Hon. High Court of Kerala lifted the ban on clear cutting, but then the Hon. Prime Minister of India requested the Government of Kerala to stop further works in the project area until all aspects were fully discussed. In December, the Government of Kerala declared the Silent Valley area, excluding the Hydroelectric Project area, as a National Park.

In 1982 a multidisciplinary committee with Prof. M. G. K. Menon as chairman, was created to decide if the Hydroelectric Project was feasible without any significant ecological damage. Early in 1983, Prof. Menon's Committee submitted its report. After a careful study of the Menon report, the Hon. Prime Minister of India decided to abandon the Project. On October 31, 1984 Indira Gandhi was assassinated and on November 15 the Silent Valley forests were declared as a National Park, though the boundaries of the Silent Valley Park were limited and no buffer zone was created, despite recommendations by expert committees and scientists.

In 2001 a new Hydro project was proposed and the "Man vs. Monkey debate" was revived. The proposed site of the dam (64.5 m high and 275 m long) is just 3.5 km downstream of the old dam site at Sairandhiri, 500 m outside the National Park boundary. The 84 km² catchment of the project area included 79 km² of the Silent Valley National Park. The Kerala Minister for Electricity called The Pathrakkadavu dam (PHEP) an "eco-friendly alternative" to the old Silent Valley project. The PHEP was designed as a run-

off-the-river project with an installed capacity of 70 MW in the first phase (105 MW eventually) and an energy generation of 214 million units (Mu) with a minimal gross storage of 0.872 million cubic metres. The claim was that the submergence area of the PHEP would be a negligible .041 km² compared to 8.30 km² submergence of the 1970s (SVHEP). However, the spectacular waterfall between the Neelikkal and Pathrakkadavu hills bordering the Silent Valley will disappear if the proposed Pathrakkadavu hydro-electric project is implemented.

During January to May 2003 a rapid Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) was carried out during by the Thiruvananthapuram-based Environmental Resources Research Centre and its report was released in December, stating that forest lost due to the project would be just .2216 km², not including the 7.4 km approach road and land to be acquired for the powerhouse in Karapadam.

Nepal Padam (2009) indicated that the central issue of the Silent Valley protests included, “The protection of the tropical rainforest, maintenance of the ecological balance. The campaigns and petitions were the main strategies adopted by the activists in the movement, grounding it on the non-violent, Gandhian ideological orientation, the protest against the destruction of forest, an opposition to ecologically unsustainable development, and above all, maintenance of the ecological balance (Nepal, Padam 2009).

CONCLUSION: -

To summarize, in contemporary world, numerous grass root environmental

movements launched against the developmental activities that have endangered the ecological balance. During the past three decades’ people in various regions of India have bent nonviolent action movements to protect their environment, their livelihood, and their ways of life. These environmental movements have emerged from the Himalayan regions of Uttar Pradesh to the tropical forests of Kerala and from Gujarat to Tripura in response to projects that threaten to dislocate people and to affect their basic human rights to land, water, and ecological stability of life-support systems. They share certain features, such as democratic values and decentralized decision making, with social movements operating in India. The environmental movements are slowly progressing toward defining a model of development to replace the current resource-intensive one that has created

severe ecological instability. Similar grassroots environmental movements are emerging in Japan, Malaysia, the Philippines, Indonesia, and Thailand. Throughout Asia and the Pacific citizenry organizations are working in innovative ways to reclaim their environment (Rush 1991).