

Environmental Movements: An Important Phenomenon. A Contemporary Aspect in India

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*That's the big mistake the environmental movement made - 'We'll scare the hell out of you, and you'll become an activist'.
(Noam Klien)*

Abstract: *The environmental movement in the present time is the reaction of our negative action towards the ecosystem which we are simultaneously observing and doing. Just like we have social movements, somehow in the same parameters, we have environmental movements. Environmental movements all over India have grown significantly. There is much writing on the environment movements of the 20th century. In the paper, it is highlighted that why we need environmental movements and also discussed some important environmental movements in India. Reasons for the environmental movements also been highlighted in the paper A brief significance of the related phenomena of environmental movement has been also described.*

Keywords: Environmental movements, Ecologism, Conservation, Natural resources

1. Introduction

In contemporary times environmental movements gain a lot of acceleration in the conservation of natural resources all over the globe. But the irony is this environment is continuously has been under the clutches of degradation and exploitation in the 21st century. If we compare it to the early period of human history, we come to the conclusion that in early times there were less information and awareness about environmental issue but the environment. But today we have more information and awareness pertaining to the environmental issues, despite this fact the ratio of environmental degradation is more in present time as compared to early times. One obvious answer to this problem is very much simple and that is the increasing population adversely impacted the environment and we are adding more to this than all the rest of the problems linked and chained with this. There are a lot of movements erupted all over the globe in respect to conservation and awareness of environmental issues. We are mainly focussing on the movements with special reference to India in the 21st century.

There is a lot of work has been done on early environmental movements in India, particularly the movements which erupted before partition and after the partition of the subcontinent.

Defining the environmental movements:

- An environmental movement can be defined as a political or social movement, in concern for the conservation and improvement of the environment. The terms 'conservation movement' & 'green movement' are often alternatively used to point the same.
- The environmental movements subscribe to the sustainable management of natural resources. The movements many a time focus on the protection and

conservation of the environment via changes in public policy. Many movements are focusing on safeguarding ecosystems, ecology, health, and human rights.

Why do we need Environmental Movements?

There is no one and monist answer to this question as per different environmentalists. We have deep ecologist ideology, shallow ecologist ideology, green movements, green politics, we have Gia hypothesis, and much more. There is ample work has been done on all these mentioned ideologies while answering the above question, But here in this paper, we do not discuss all these ideologies and thinkers and how they are looking at the environment. But will go through our own local understanding and analysis.

The history of human civilization is the history of the development of knowledge. Any discipline whether it is social sciences, natural science, material sciences, there motive is to make human life in a better position. But as human civilization develops by mind and matter, there arose different challenges to them and humans realized that what we called development today may be in the near future it will be a disaster. and we have ample evidence to substantiate this. The human mind has limitations, the power of human mind intelligence is not unlimited, and we are not independent, the wrong move of our development can adversely impact us and yes, we did face the consequences of the wrong move of our intellect in the past. Here we are not denying the fact that of human mind achieved significant success in every field of knowledge but at the same time we can't deny the fact that human civilization faced negative consequences of its (Human) mind. Our active conscious guide us in the development of our material need.

If we analyse the 18th and 19th centuries thoroughly it significantly impacted every aspect of human life. Environmental movements also got much importance in this

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era. We have seen the industrial development which further pave way to the development of capitalist society. This move of history resulted in the development of environmental concerns all over the world because such a move towards industrialization put negative consequences on the environment.

Environmental organizations established during the late 19th to the middle of - 20th century were mainly middle - class lobbying groups whose concerned with wildlife protection, nature conservation, and the pollution that arose from industrial development. There were also scientific organizations bothered with biological aspects of conservation efforts and natural history.

The environmental issue is not a social construct like other social and political philosophies but its such a reality which is not challenging in nature. Environmental movement is not an independent variable it is the reaction to human action which used the environment and its resources irrationally unjust able way. After the reaction of nature (the nature which has been exploited unjustly) human realizes that their actions with context to the environment in which they live are not just and this fact put pressure on a human to think about the environment and that's why today we are surrounded by environmental movements. So here we are as citizens in the 21st century with more knowledge, more wealth than ever before on this planet, and also more capable of, - if you want - transforming the environment around us. movements. The age of the Anthropocene is also a drive of reminding humans of the fact that the act that we do today will hit life on this planet possibly three to four centuries down the line.

What is important: Environmentalism or Ecologism?

The answer to this question is not so much tough as it has been constructed throughout time. We have a different version of feminism and there is debate that which version of feminism is most accepted one and which will solve the major portions of problems of the women similarly we have various versions with respect to safeguarding the environment. Environmentalism is concerned for the environment but they are human - centered, their belief is that human is above all the entity. They are anthropocentric in nature. On the other hand, ecologism gives an intrinsic value to 'nature'. Humans are Knot in the net and it is the net that is much important not the one knots. There are different environmental movements which are focussing on the diverse perspective of the environment and their methodological tilt is aslo different with regard to conserve and safeguard the in nature. Some environmental movements inclined toward environmentalism and some toward ecologism.

As per our view treating the environment and its resource and value intrinsic in in nature will eventually result in the decline of environmental problems like ozone depletion, global warming, co2 rise, land degradation, climate change. much the of ecologism and environmentalism takes place within the context of a discussion of the so - called "environmental crisis".

What are the reasons for the emergence of environmental movements in India: Major reasons of the emergence of environmental movements in India have been described by Sharma, Aviram (2007) he discussed the following reasons which include

- 1) False developmental policies of the government,
- 2) Control over natural resources,
- 3) Socioeconomic reasons,
- 4) Environmental degradation/ destruction and,
- 5) Spread of environmental awareness and media. ¹

Types of Environmental movements

In India Environmental movements have emerged from 1970s afterwards as against of state sponsored or centred pattern of development. Natural resource - based conflicts on the use and access of natural resources in various parts of the country lie at the centre of these environmental movements. These movements have opposed and defy 'increasing monopolization and commodification of natural resources like water, land, forests, their unsustainable use and in equal distribution, exploitative power relations, the centralization of decision making and disempowerment of communities caused by the growth procedure. They declared people's rights over natural rights and decision making processes (Sangvai 2007 111). Though we cannot speak of a singular routeway of the environmental movement in India, as the environmental dialogue is composed of multi - sited happenings, a range of practices, institutional and political and surrounds, a diversity of actors and fabrics of thinking and intervention (Brara 2005). The situation gets also complicated when 'conduct supposed as environmental cross cut analogous forms of collaborative conduct in the field of race, gender, indigenous autonomy, labour and mortal rights' (Dwivedi 2001). ¹

Link among Environmental Movements and NGOs:

The most significant characteristic of environmental movements in India is that, there is the involvement of ground - level voluntary organizations or Non - Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in these environmental movements. Many examples can be given. In case of the famous known Chipko movement, the work of Dasholi Gram Swarajya Mandal (DGSM), Gopeswar, which was engaged in welfare work within the Uttarakhand, was considerably significant. The volunteers of the Dasholi Gram Swarajya Mandal realized that forest and land, and forest and man were linked in a complex way. Then they started educating the people about the bad effects of deforestation within the hill slopes and gradually they geared themselves within the movement. A similar case is true in of Silent Valley Movement. The Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad (KSSP), an NGO, was working for more than three decades among the people of Kerala for growing environmental consciousness. This voluntary organization was working with people in popularizing science and appropriate technology and in the drive against the environmentally ruinous development projects. A campaign has been launched against the Silent Valley Project by KSSP. A lot of NGOs are also connected with the Narmada Bachao Andolan (Salunkhe, S. A.2011: 17 - 18).

¹Sharma, Aviram (2007)

During the last some years, “voluntary organizations are increasingly checked out as an inherent a part of India’s development process. Hundreds of NGOs are working at the micro - level, and although environmental concerns are subjectively new, they are an overwhelming phenomenon. No doubt, since the beginning of the last decade, approximately all Indian NGOs have been working with environmental issues. Community organizations have emerged through local rights and the environment. NGOs are local or external interveners that make and support community groups in protecting local rights and environment” (Swain, Ashok 1997: 829).

Significance of Local Environmental Movement in contemporary times:

There are three level of significance of environmental movements; Global level, regional level, and local level significance of environmental movements. Christopher and Rootes, (2007) Talks about the significance of the study of local environmental groups and movements in the following words: Local environmental campaigns are ubiquitous and intermittent, even in times when environmental issues are not salient on national agenda. Still their relationship to trans - local environmental movements and issues has been relatively neglected. Local environmental campaigns are variously related to national and local organizations, and the peculiarities of place are one factor in that variation. But place itself attains meaning through campaigns, and communities forge identity even as they mobilize against threats of their survival. The relationship between global campaigns and local environmental issues is problematic, but the tracks in which local mobilizations often combine issues of environment, economic justice and democracy mirror the emerging agenda of transnational environmentalism.² It can be altercated that, the above quote makes clear the significance of the study of local environmental NGOs and local environmental groups and their movements in a democratic country like India, where there is dearth of exhaustive research on this topic. Hence, systematic study of these grassroots local environmental Groups/NGOs could be sighted as one of the rich areas of research in the discipline of sociology of environmental movements.

The approach toward safeguarding the environment should be both individualistic and communistic in nature. We must change our pattern of our life if we want a healthy and sustainable environment. We should treat environment as member of our family and treat it like family.

New - born environmental movements in India in recent years

1) Taste of war

Target soft drinks, 2003

She earned the image of a fierce public legionnaire, when she took on important cola manufacturers. “ Sunita Narain, director, Centre for Science and Environment (CSE), threw two cola titans, Coca Cola and Pepsico in the line of fire as 12 major brands of soft drinks in Delhi showed 15 to 87

times further situations of deadly fungicides known to beget cancer and other diseases. ”

2) Save the Sundarbans

The Sundarbans are the largest mangrove timber each over the world, and are located in the delta of the Ganga and the Brahmaputra. The Sundarban area is home to saltwater crocodiles and Bengal barracuda/Tiger among other species.60 percent of it lies in Bangladesh and the rest in India. It spans over square kilometers and is home to several species of foliage and fauna including the Royal Bengal Tiger. Still, the largest complete tract of mangrove forestland in the world is shrinking rapidly because of increased ocean levels and beatings from cyclones, which are more frequent due to climate change. The cyclone Amphan in May 2020, the worst cyclone since 1737, left a trail of misery in the Sundarbans. Livelihoods were destroyed and hampered, people were displaced, dikes were traduced and thousands of people are now solely reliant on relief camps. The mangrove forestlands are at a high threat because of a more pronounced rise in ocean position than anywhere else which could ultimately lead to a severe migration extremity of the original communities. A crusade surfaced online to#SavetheSundarbans. In the middle of a global epidemic, concerned citizens resorted to giving to organisations working on ground, initiating dialogue about this treasure like the Amazon or Australian Bush and making art to spread mindfulness under the#SundarbansChallenge.

3) Right to Breathe Protest

The nation’s capital Stragled into an environmental crisis because the Air Quality Index (AQI) plummeted to 494. Toxic smog choked the town with mere inhaling Delhi being considered a hazard to one’s health. The protest, organized as a aftereffect of various movements on social media, saw over 1, 500 people assemble at Amar Jawan Jyoti, India Gate on November 5. Leonardo Dicaprio highlighted the success of those demonstrations in triggering climate action by the govt. A special panel was found out to deal with the difficulty, Supreme Court ordered the state governments to deal with the crop and waste burning issue, Centre agreed to use the Green budget to combat toxic air pollution but the air quality was still extremely poor.

4) Climate Action Strike

In the third week of September, in 2019 saw students across big cities like Mumbai, Delhi, Chennai Bengaluru, Kolkata and stage peaceful protests at main prominent city centers, heeding to Greta Thunberg’s call for mass protests to urge governments to take definitive action on the problem of Climate Change. This was largely youth - led who made it some extent to worry the urgency of worldwide warming through creative slogans. The point was to spread awareness about the impact a mere 2 - degrees shift could wear the earth.

²(Rootes, Christopher 2007: 722).



Source of image: Google; Feminism In India

Environmentalists like Bittu KR also partook and he emphasised how the govt has got to heed to concrete policy demands and transcend token afforestation in an effort to portray its devotedness to the environment. It was part of a global voice of solidarity to battle for climate justice and emphasise on its importance. Emphasized

Changing orientation

We find a significant change in our orientation 1991 onwards the Indian economy started to the track for liberalization. The shift from state controls to privatization was in part welcome, for the licence - permit - quota - Raj had stifled innovation and entrepreneurship. Unfortunately, the supporter of liberalization mounted an even more savage raid on environmentalists than did the advocates of state socialism. Under their strong influence the media, once so sensitive to environmental matters, now began to demonize people like Medha Patkar, leader of the Narmada movement. Potent columnists charged that she, and her comrades, were relics from a by paste era, archconservative leftists who want to keep India backward. In a single generation, environmentalists had gone from being seen as capitalist compadre to being definite as socialist stooges.

Environmentalists were attacked because, with the dismantling of state controls, only they asked the tough questions. When a new highway, factory, or mining project was proposed, only they asked where the water or land would come from, or what the impact would be for the quality of the state of the forests, air, and the livelihood of the people. Was development under liberalization only going to further intensify the disparities between countryside and city? Before approving the rash of mining leases in central India, or the massive hydel projects being inbuilt the high (and seismically fragile) Himalayas, had anyone systematically assessed their social and environmental costs and benefits? Was a system in which the Environmental Impact Assessment was written by the protagonist himself something a democracy should tolerate? These, and other

questions like them, were ignored whilst they were being asked.

2. Conclusion

In recent years Environmental Movements in India which also including green politics conservation of ecology is a dissimilar scientific, political social, movements to handle environmental issues. Environmental movement basically is a sub field or is a type of "social movement that involves an array of groups, persons, and coalitions that observe a common interest in environmental protection and act to cause changes in environmental policies and practices"¹. The environmental movements support the sustainable management of the resources of nature. Environmental movement at presently in India gained interdisciplinary importance both in theory and in practice The environmental movements often stress the protection of the environment via changes in public policy. Many movements are focussing on health, ecology, and human rights. Environmental movements ambit from the highly shaped and formally institutionalized ones to the radically informal activities. The spatial scope of varied environmental movements ranges from being local to almost global. Environment movements in India now are interdisciplinary in action, today we are approaching or looking at environment movements as independent but looking at them interrelated with other movements. We need to approach environmental issue both as personnel and public interest if we want to exterminate the environmental problems from the globe.

Our Own Suggestion

- 1) Environmental movements must be approached through personnel and public lens
- 2) We should contribute at ground level for the awareness of local environmental problems

- 3) Our approach should be value - free in order to internalize the role and responsibility towards environmental movements.
- 4) A simplistic life can contribute much to the environment safeguard, so this passive action should be promoted through education, media etc.
- 5) Every year lot of elite conferences held around the globe to safeguard the environment, but where is the outcomes, it should be checked locally, weather these important conventions, meetings, laws regarding environment and ecology really working at ground level or not.

We can honestly make a difference and our role as environmentalists living in the twenty first century is to deliver people confidence that the future is not only a derivative of the past.

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