

THE GENESIS OF ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENTS

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ABSTRACT

Environmental movements usually highlight certain basic issues of ecological deterioration. Most of these are social movements that have collective actions inspired by groups of volunteers that are socially as well as politically motivated. These agitations primarily focus on the preservation of environmental conditions through changes in government policies. The main purpose is to sustainably manage natural resources and reduce their depleting tendency. These movements may cover a large geographical area spanning from local to global. Here the associated agitations may invite the participation of environmentally motivated people from all sections of our society primarily in the form of social groups and they may be belonging to any region or religion. Many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and social groups actively engage in awareness programs that protect our fundamental as well as human rights and monitor developmental plans. The basic aim of these organizations is to have a large vision of achieving enhanced quality of life..

Keywords: *Environmental Movements, Social Movements, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Social Groups, Collective Actions.*

Introduction

An environmental movement is a social or political movement that cares to conserve the environment and adopts measures for improving the state of the environment. In present conditions, India is facing rapid industrialization followed by urbanization. In recent times, environmental pollution has become a focal point of collective action initiated by NGOs, social groups, social activists, environmentalists, and concerned citizens. Most of the major cities in our country are facing acute environmental pollution problems related to air, water, and land. Apart from other issues, environmental movements in India also focus on building dams, climate change and global warming-related displacement issues, and unaddressed resettlement modalities. Several consequences erupt due to tampering with the courses of natural resources. Protest actions are initiated against such forces that are responsible for degrading the environment. In our country, there are several traditional practices of worshipping plants and trees as well as forests and rivers. This reflects our wisdom of observing unity between the living and the non-living world. Environmental movements normally attract participation from all categories of caste, race, and religion. Environmental movements are very diverse and complex. The organizational features of such movements range from highly organized and formally institutionalized formats to radically informal ones. The scope of their activities ranges from local to global, and the nature of their concerns also ranges from a single issue to a full display of global environmental concerns. Most environmental movements arise due to some local issues that emerge as a sequence of independent responses to highlight and check the destruction of natural resources resulting in ecological devastation. Even Public Interest Litigation (PIL) has emerged as an arbiter of citizens' rights and in times of executive and legislative indifferences, it surfaces as an essential tool to seek justice. Some of the major

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environmental movements include Bishnoi Movement, Chipko Movement, Appiko Movement, Silent Valley Movement, Narmada Bachao Andolan, and Tehri Dam Conflict.

The Inception of Collective Action

Environmental movements can evolve with three levels of collective action.

- **The local grassroots movement level:** A Local Grassroots Environmental Movement (LGEM) is a movement fighting a particular instance of pollution in a geographically specified region. Local Grassroots Environmental Movements have a limited range of goals that are tied to specific pollution problems.
- **The social movement level:** A social movement is a broader struggle that involves formal organizations or a federation of loosely affiliated networks. Social movements have a wide range of goals directed at fundamental social and political reform.
- **Bound by a cycle of protest:** A cycle of protest is a specific period of heightened protest involving several social movements that spread across different geographical areas and sectors of society.

Ideological Trends

Ideology is an important aspect of social movement. It includes collective efforts that favour or oppose a social change. It is a driving force behind any social movement. Social movement changes the structure of any system and ideology adds authenticity and value to this movement. If any ideology is driven by action, then it becomes a social movement. Sometimes the course of social movement produces such ideas that it forms an ideology. There may be different ideologies that may inspire different groups to engage together in a social movement. Sometimes more than one ideology may inspire a particular environmental group or movement and there may be occasions when any one ideology motivates more than one environmental group or movement. In the Chipko movement in Uttarakhand, multiple ideologies were observed in different phases. Here Sunder Lal Bahuguna followed Gandhian Ideology while Chandi Prasad Bhatt advocated ideology based on the appropriate use of technology and for some time even Marxist strategy was observed. Some of the ideological trends identified in environmental movements include:

- **Crusading Gandhians:** Crusading Gandhians reject modernization and propagate morality and tradition.
- **Ecological Marxists:** Ecological Marxists propagate the idea of the distribution of resources equally among all. They argue that both the rich and the poor destroy forests for their benefit. Rich destroy forests for profit while the poor do it for survival. To avoid such a situation, equal distribution of resources is encouraged.
- **Appropriate Technologists:** Appropriate Technologists propagate the middle path and strive for a balance between the old and the new. They do not challenge the system but provide alternatives to outdated technologies.
- **Wilderness Enthusiasts:** Wilderness Enthusiasts propagate naturalism and they talk of biological diversity and species equality. They show concern for wildlife and favour the setting up of parks, sanctuaries, and protected areas.
- **Scientific Conservationists:** They promote efficiency and management measures and propose administrative control.

Classification of Environmental Movements

The environmental movements have been classified based on their sources and origin.

- **Environmental Movements based on forest and land.** Here the related issues include the right to resources in forests, the use of natural resources non-commercially, to prevent land degradation, and social justice and human rights issues. These movements include the Bishnoi movement, Chipko movement, Appiko Movement, and Tribal Movements that happened anywhere in the country.
- **Environmental Movements based on marine resources, fisheries, and aquaculture.** Here the related issues include a ban on trawling, to prevent the commercial activity of shrimp and prawn culture, protecting the use of marine resources, and implementing the regulations of the coastal zone. These movements include the National Fish Workers' Forum which works for the benefit of traditional fishermen in Kerala and the Save Chilika Movement in Odisha.

- **Environmental Movements based on industrial pollution.** Here the related issues include the measures which strictly control pollution and compensation issues. It also includes casual expansion of industries where design, locational factors, and other livelihood issues of local people are not considered. These movements include Zahrili Gas Morcha in Bhopal, Ganga Mukti Andolan in Bihar, and the Movement Against the poisoning of Cheliyar River in Kerala by the Kerala Sasthra Sahithya Parishad (KSSP).
- **Environmental Movements based on the development projects.** These movements are further categorized as follows:
 - **Environmental Movements based on the dams and irrigation projects.** Here the related issues include protecting the tropical forests, managing ecological balance, destructive types of development, and rehabilitation including resettlement of the displaced people. Such movements include Silent Valley Movement by KSSP, Narmada Bachao Andolan, and the Movement against the Tehri Bandh by the Tehri Bandh Virodhi Samiti.
 - **Environmental Movements based on the power projects.** Here the related issues include managing ecological balance and issues of the high cost of rehabilitation and resettlement. Examples of such movements include Jan Andolan in Dabhol against Enron Corporation in Maharashtra.
 - **Environmental Movements based on the mining project.** Here the related issues include depletion of the natural resources, land degradation, and ecological imbalance. Examples of such movements include the anti-mine project in Doon Valley and the Anti-Bauxite mine movement, also called the Balco project in Odisha.
 - **Environmental Movements based on the industrial plants, Railway projects, and Airport projects.** Here the related issues include the realignment, rehabilitation, and resettlement of the displaced people and the management of ecological balance. Examples of such movements include protests and the demands of the Konkan Railway Realignment Action Committee and Citizen's group against the Dupont Nylon 6.6, Goa Amravati Bachao Abhiyan against a large chemical complex.
 - **Environmental Movements based on the military bases.** Here the related issues include managing ecological balance, rehabilitation, resettlement, and safety issues. Such movements include Anti -missiles test ranges in Baliapal and Netrahat in Bihar.
- **Environmental Movements based on the Wild-Life sanctuaries and National Parks.** Here the related issues include displacement, rehabilitation, resettlement, and regarding the loss of livelihood. These movements include Shramik Mukti Andolan in Sanjay Gandhi National Park in Mumbai.
- **Environmental Movements based on Tourism.** Here the related issues include displacement, cultural changes, and issues of social ills. These movements include Himachal Bachao Andolan and Bailancho Saad, Goa.
- **Environmental Movements based on Advocacy groups, individual campaigns, and Citizen's Action Groups .** Here the related issues include policy inputs, strict measures for protected areas, a clear policy for national park and wildlife sanctuaries, research, training and documentation on wildlife, education related to conservation, environmental management based on community, publications related to environmental problems, intellectual support to movements based on environmental issues. Such movements include Society for Clean Cities, the Bombay Natural History Society(BNHS), the Centre for Science and Environment(CSE), Delhi, and some Research, training, and documentation organizations like the Bombay Environmental Action Group and Save Bombay Committee.
- **Environmental Movements based on Appropriate Technology and Organic Farming.** Here the related issues include International debates, Sustainable Development, Eco-friendly models of development, Low- cost environment- friendly housing, and technology. These movements include Ralegaon Siddhi (Anna Hazare Village), Society for Promoting Participative Ecosystem Management (SOPECOMM), Laurie Baker's Housing experiments, and People's Science Institute, DehraDun.

Conclusion

Environmental movements have a large influence on policy decisions, but at any time, somewhere, environmental degradation of the global environment continues unabated. The continuously rising population has led to rapid urbanization and has resulted in deforestation. Natural resources are being over-exploited to enhance industrial production to realize rising consumer demands. Globally environmental awareness is on the rise and with the support of green advocacy and scientific evidence environmental movements are making significant impacts on the implementation of environmental policies. Such movements reflect common public opinion emerging from social and political levels. Collective action also surfaces the optimistic approach that remains buried in the aggrieved masses but by coming together with social groups they all gain confidence and move ahead to redress their problems. Socially motivated environmental movements create public awareness by organizing and managing community-based programs and by opposing certain pernicious developmental projects they strike a balance between environment and development.

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