

ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENTS BY WOMEN

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Especially interesting is the leading role women played in the nation's early environmental movement. This movement began at least a century and a half ago, peaked in the Progressive era of the 1890s, and then declined during the war years in the early- to mid-20th century. Environmental movements of various countries have emerged due to different reasons. It is basically due to prevailing environmental quality of the locality. The environmental movements in the north are basically on the issue of quality of life. Whereas the environment movements in the south arise due to some other reasons, such as due to conflicts for controlling of natural resources and many more. It is being said that the, environmental movements in India The participants of these movements in North are the middle class and upper class women, who have concern for the nature. But protesters are generally the marginal population – hill peasants, tribal communities, fishermen and other underprivileged people. The different environmental movements in our own country support this argument. The examples could be taken as Chipko, N.B.A Movements. Mitti Bachao Movements Andolan, Koel-Karo Movements(Andolan) and Green Belt Movements (Andolana) Narmada Bachao Movements Andolan etc. That is why the environmentalism of the is refereed as “full stomach” environmentalism and the environmentalism of the south is called as “empty – belly” environmentalism.

Chipko movement (Andolan)

One of the first environmentalist movement which was inspired by women was the Chipko movement (Women tree-huggers in India). "Its name comes from a Hindi word meaning “to stick” (as in glue). The movement was an act of defiance against the state government's permission given to a corporation for commercial logging. Women of the villages resisted, embracing trees to prevent their felling to safeguard their lifestyles which were dependent on the forests. Deforestation could qualitatively alter the lives of all village residents but it was the women who agitated for saving [End Page 163] the forests. Organized by a non-governmental organization that Chandi Prasad Bhatt led, the Chipko movement adopted the slogan “ecology is permanent economy.” The women embracing the trees did not tag their action as feminist activism; however, as a movement that demonstrated resistance against oppression, it had all the markings of such."

The Chipko Movement in the Uttarakhand region of the Himalayas is often treated as a women's movement to protect the forest ecology of the Uttarakhand from the axes of the contractors. But the reasons behind women's participation are more economic than ecological. In fact, the economic and ecological interests of Uttarakhand are so interwoven that it is difficult to promote one without promoting other. In this paper an attempt would be made to explain the reasons behind women's active participation in the Movement and their place within the Movement. The Chipko Movement began in 1971 as a movement by local people under the leadership of Dashauli Gram Swarajya Sangh (DGSS) to assert their rights over the forest produce. Initially demonstrations were organized in different parts of Uttarakhand demanding abolition of the contractual system of exploiting the forest-wealth, priority to the local forest-based industries in the dispersal of forest-wealth and association of local voluntary organizations and local people in the management of the forests.

In 1982, in spite of these demonstrations, the DGSS (now DGSM, M for Mandal) was refused, by the Forest Department, on ecological grounds, the permission to cut 12 Ash trees to manufacture agricultural implements. At the same time, an Allahabad based firm was allotted 32 Ash trees from the same forest to manufacture sports goods. On hearing this news, Chandi Prasad Bhatt threatened to hug the trees to protect them from being felled rather than let them be taken away by this company. Till this time, however, the women were absent.

In 1974, in spite of DGSS's protests, about 2500 trees of Reni forest were auctioned by the Forest Department. The DGSS planned to launch the Chipko Movement there. However, the local bureaucracy played the trick and managed to make the area devoid of local men as well as activists of the DGSS. To the utter surprise of everybody, 27 women of Reni village successfully prevented about 60 men from going to the forest to fell the marked trees. This was the first major success of the Chipko Movement. It is after this incident that attempts were made to project it as a women's movement. After this incident, the Reni Investigation Committee was set up by the U.P. Government and on its recommendations 1200 sq. km. of river catchment area were banned from commercial exploitation. After Reni, in 1975, the women of Gopeshwar, in 1978, of Bhyudar Valley (threshold of Valley of Flower), of Dongary-Paitoli in 1980, took the lead in protecting their forests. In Dongari and Paitoli, the women opposed their men's decision to give a 60 acre Oak forest to construct a horticulture farm. They also demanded their right to be associated in the management of the forest. Their plea was that it is the woman who collects fuel, fodder, water, etc. The question of the forest is a life and death question for her. Hence, she should have a say in any decision about the forest. Now they are not only active in protecting the forests but are also in afforesting the bare hill-slopes. Since 1976, the DGSS started afforesting such which had become vulnerable to land slides. Initially this was also an all male programme. Sometimes local village women participated on some ornamental programme on the last day of the afforestation camp. However, the idea of increasing the association of women got momentum after 1978. In the beginning, the local women were assigned the responsibility of looking after the trees planted in their villages. While planting trees their suggestions were sought about the species to be planted. To solve the fodder problem, grass imported from Kashmir was planted.

As the afforestation programme attempted to solve the problem of fuel and fodder, the women welcomed it. They looked after the trees so much so that the survival rate is between 60-80 percent. In these afforestation camps, information about different aspects of local life

is exchanged with the villagers. Their basic problems including the specific problems faced by women are discussed and ways of solving these problems are evolved.

Because both the protection and afforestation programmes reflect the needs and aspirations of women, the women have spontaneously responded to the Chipko call and became the effective links of the movement. In fact recently, due to the awakening generated during the afforestation camps, women have started Mangal Dals in many villages have become very active. In our village, the women stood for elections for village head. Previously, the women used to be passive listeners in the camps too. In one of the recent camps, July-Aug 1982, women with breast-feeding children walked about 18 kilometers to participate in the afforestation camp there. The women, who till recently were mere limbs of the movement, have now risen to leadership roles.

Mitti Bachao Movement (Andolan)

oil is a fundamental resource for the welfare of human, and life in general on earth, and as such it is one of the most important assets to protect and pass on to future generations. India has the onerous task of feeding almost 17 percent of the global human 11 per cent of the livestock population on only 2.3 per cent of the world's land and the entire burden of producing enough depends upon the first few inches of the earth's crust - SOIL. It is estimated that by 2025, India would require 350 million tonnes of food grains to feed its teeming millions. This target has to be met under the constraint of an almost fixed net cultivated area hovering around 140 ± 2 million ha since the 1970s. Land degradation is a great problem to soil health and productivity. The constraints relating to balance between living-being and soils have resulted in several kinds of land degradation, environmental pollution, decline in crop productivity and sustainability, deforestation, non-agricultural land uses, environmental deterioration, misplaced hydrology viz. water logging, salinity, sodicity, declining water table and low water use efficiency. Nearly 57% of the country's total geographical area is under various degrees and categories of soil degradation. The latest estimates given by NBSS&LUP, Nagpur show that the total degraded land in India is 187.8 Million ha, of which 162.4 million ha is due to displacement of soil material by water (148.9 m ha) and wind (13.5 m ha), 10.1 million ha by salinization, and 11.6 m ha by water logging. The remaining 3.7 m ha is affected by the depletion of nutrients. Because of continuous cultivation over centuries and intensification of agriculture in recent years, there has been progressive and substantial depletion of the soil reserves. Of late, secondary and micronutrient deficiencies are also emerging and the crop response to these nutrients is increasing. The factors responsible for higher yield are high soil productivity, supply of balance crop nutrients are the most important. Despite increasing use of chemical fertilizers over the years, there has been continuous nutrient mining of the soils. The nutrient remove from the soil for production of food grains and other agricultural crops far exceeds the nutrient applied. The threat to long term sustainability of agriculture is not due to alleged excessive use but primarily due to under use of fertilizer and the resultant nutrient mining of the soils. There is a need to develop sustainable soil management systems for achieving target food production from limited soil resources. Therefore, Mitti bachao slogan for conserving soil resource for future is more relevant in present situation to feed the rising populations.

Green Belt movement (Andolan)

Another movement, which is one of the biggest in women and environmental history, is the Green Belt movement. Nobel Prize winner Wangari Maathai founded this movement on the

World Environment Day in June 1977. The starting ceremony was very simple: a few women planted seven trees in Maathai's backyard. By 2005, 30 million trees had been planted by participants in the Green Belt movement on public and private lands. The Green Belt movement aims to bring environmental restoration along with society's economic growth. This movement led by Maathai focused on restoration of Kenya's rapidly diminishing forests as well as empowering the rural women through environmental preservation, with a special emphasis on planting indigenous trees.

The Green Belt Movement, a programme initiated by Professor Wangari Maathai and the National Council of Women of Kenya (NCWK), performs a double duty in organising the planting of trees. It both reduces the effects of deforestation and provides a forum for women to be creative and effective leaders. Working with Green Belt gives women the ability to change their environment and make their own decisions. The movement also involves the transfer of technology from experts to the people, turning small scale farmers into agro-foresters. Ideally, public awareness is raised on issues related to environment and development, and meetings related to tree planting activities encompass discussions on the relationships between food, population and energy.

The promotion of a positive image of women is one of the most important goals of the NCWK and its Green Belt Movement. Involving women as equal participants and developers of the Green Belts leads to a positive self-image for women, and consequently provides models of significant female achievement. Trained to properly plant and cultivate seedlings, women both assist in reforestation and generate a source of income for themselves.

The seedlings are sold to the organization and then redistributed at no charge. Self-sufficiency for communities in terms of wood fuel also reduces the daily burdens on Kenyan women. Often the ravages of deforestation require women to search hours and miles for wood, while the daily requirements exceed the supply a woman can carry on her back.

Integrating the physically disabled population and young people who leave school represents another objective of the Green Belt movement. Organizers hope that by becoming involved, these individuals will be encouraged to remain in their communities, rather than migrating to the urban areas in search of jobs or charity. The time that these groups have to devote to care of the trees provides a reciprocal benefit to the organization.

The most direct objective, however, involves the programme's impact on the environment. The Green Belt Movement aims to create an understanding of the relationship between the environment and other issues such as food production and health. Education serves a critical role. Children gain exposure through Green Belt projects at their schools; small farmers learn to appreciate the connections between forestry, soil conservation and their own needs for wood.

If an individual or group learns of the Green Belt Movement and wishes to participate, the interested party must first prepare the available land to meet Movement specifications. A member of the Green Belt staff inspects and approves the resulting holes before an application can be filled out. Before the planter receives

any trees, a Green Belt Promoter discusses the physical demands and maintenance requirements of new seedlings. Care is taken to ensure a thorough understanding of participants' obligations and thus foster a high survival rate for the trees.

An extensive follow-up procedure also promotes success. The Green Belt Rangers, often physically disabled individuals, periodically check the progress and care of the trees and offer advice on any problems. When a large green belt is planned, the organization attempts to have a ceremony with important guests of honor, to emphasise the significance of the event and heighten community awareness of the project. Such activities also provide the National Council of Women, Kenya, with an opportunity to meet community leaders and establish critical ties between the women's group and other organizations.

Women's image has been enhanced through public exposure and public awareness of environmental issues has also been increased. Thousands of letters have been written expressing interest in the project. The Green Belt Movement in Kenya provides a means to reforest the land as it promotes a variety of social issues. Involving the whole population, from children to the disabled to farmers to women, proves that much can be accomplished through grassroots projects that respond to a multitude of needs.

It confirms the essential connections between the improvement of women's condition and the needs of society as a whole. In recognition of the great achievements of the Green Belt Movement **Professor Wangari Maathai** was presented with a Women Aid Woman of the World Award in 1989.

Navdanya Movement (Andolan)

Navdanya also known as the 'Nine Seeds Movement' seeks to empower local Indian farmers to move away from growing any genetically modified organism (GMOs) on their land and return to organic, chemical-free practices. This movement has reached over 5,000,000 Indian farmers and created over 65 seed banks around India. Navdanya fights to eliminate the commercialization of indigenous knowledge also known as 'Biopiracy'. Navdanya addresses multiple other international issues including climate change, food security, misapplication of technology, food sovereignty, fair trade, and many others. This movement also created a learning center entitled Bija Vidyapeeth. Bija Vidyapeeth, in collaboration with Schumacher College in the United Kingdom, seeks to educate participants in sustainability and ecological principles.

Kenyan land takeover (Andolan)

In Kenya, starting in the mid 1980s, women protested against the elites and big foreign corporations who were coercing and controlling the production of the land. Rather than allowing food to be grown for survival, women were pressured by both their husbands and the government to cultivate coffee for foreign profit. Protests continued and gained strength over the next couple of decades. The protests eventually ended in a Kenyan power shift enforcing democratic national elections which resulted in redistribution of land possible.

Narmada Bachao Andolan (Andolan)

Social mobilisation, for various reasons, has been popular in India from the period of 1970s. The broader aim of these movements was development of society. Some of the well-known movements that took place in India are : **Chipko movement, Narmada Bachao Andolan, Koel Karo, Chattisgarh Mukti Morcha, Jhola Andolan, the movement supporting Anna Hazare**, etc. These movements distanced themselves from politics or political parties. In this blog, I will take up the detailed case study of the Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA). A detailed emphasis will be given on these

main areas : background(why did such an andolan start??), formation , happenings in NBA till date, the various issues raised and a critical analysis of such social movements and development projects.

The Narmada River flows in central India, mainly through the states of MP, Maharashtra and Gujarat. The source of Narmada is a small tank called Narmada Kund located on the Amarkantak hill, in the Anuppur District of eastern Madhya Pradesh. It flows from east to west along with Tapi and Mahi, over a length of 1,312 km (815.2 miles) before draining through the Gulf of Cambey (Khambhat) into the Arabian Sea, 30 km (18.6 miles) west of Bharuch city of Gujarat. The first proposals concerning the construction of dams on the Narmada river for irrigation can be traced back to 1945–46 when the idea was mooted by the Central Waterways, Irrigation and Navigation Commission. The Navagam site was first recommended in 1957. Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru launched the first version of this project on 5 April 1961. During the years following the laying of the foundation stone, a number of issues were raised in inter-state proceedings. The Government of India then decided in 1964 to appoint the Khosla Committee to study the entire Narmada basin and prepare a master plan for the optimum and integrated development of the water resources for irrigation, power generation, navigation, flood control and other aims. The Khosla Committee decided that a high dam at Navagam made more economic sense and gave more benefits than a combination of dams in the Navagam-Hiranphal gorge. The proposals of the Khosla Committee were opposed by Maharashtra and MP. As a result, the Central Government constituted the Narmada Water Dispute Tribunal (NWDT) in October 1969. Following 'references' by all the parties involved, the NWDT's final award was gazetted at the end of 1979. The NWDT allocated more water share to Gujarat as compared to other states. The NWDT also fixed the height of the Sardar Sarovar Project (SSP) at FRL 138.68 m. It also allocated power benefits among the concerned states. The shares of the three states were put at 57 per cent for MP, 27 per cent for Maharashtra and 16 per cent for Gujarat. The power benefits are meant to ensure that the extensive irrigation water benefits to Gujarat are somewhat counter-balanced with a more favourable allocation of power to the two states facing most of the submergence. It should be noted that the main rationale for the dam is to provide irrigation and drinking water to water-scarce areas of Gujarat. In other words, it is clearly understood that power generation is only an additional benefit of the dam. If irrigation and drinking water are the main expected benefits from the dam, oustees would be expected to get a share of these irrigation and drinking water benefits. The NWDT Award paved the way for the actual implementation of the project. While construction had officially started in 1961 when Jawaharlal Nehru laid the foundation stone, it is in fact only after the NWDT Award that actual final planning and work on what is today the SSP started. Besides the NWDT Award allowing the Gujarat Government to implement the project, the next event that actually kick-started the project was the World Bank agreeing in 1985 to provide \$450 million to finance the construction of the dam and canal network. The involvement of the World Bank was crucial in many respects as it was involved in the final planning for the project during the early 1980s while it was reviewing its suitability for funding.

The involvement of the World Bank also internationalised the project and contributed to the development of a worldwide civil society interest in the SSP and other Narmada dams. The actual start of the construction also led future oustees to progressively become aware of their destiny. This period coincided with the development of various efforts to ensure that oustees would be at least entitled to the minimum package offered in the NWDT. Among the different groups that started working with oustees, some seem to have at first tried to engage with the project

promoters to ensure complete resettlement and rehabilitation whereas, some other groups took a stronger stance against the building of the dam itself. There were groups such as Gujarat-based Arch-Vahini (Action Research in Community Health and Development), Narmada Asargrasta Samiti (Committee for people affected by the Narmada dam), Madhya Pradesh-based Narmada Ghati Nav Nirman Samiti (Committee for a new life in the Narmada Valley) and Maharashtra-based Narmada Dharangrasta Samiti (Committee for Narmada dam-affected people) who either believed in the need for fair rehabilitation plans for the people or who vehemently opposed dam construction despite a resettlement policy.

Medha Patkar got involved in this movement when she and her colleagues took a tour to the Narmada Valley. She was upset after looking at the poor conditions of people who were going to be affected by the dam. In 1986, Medha organized a 36 day long march from Madhya Pradesh to the dam site. The marchers had to endorse a strict ideological commitment to non violence and also follow Satyagraha. As Medha Patkar and other marchers reached Gujarat, they were violently attacked by the police. The march brought everyone's attention to the Sardar Sarovar Project. Later Medha Patkar formed Narmada Bachao Andolan(NBA) in 1989. The main goal of this movement was to provide the residents in the Narmada valley with access to the project information and legal representation and stopping the Sardar Sarovar Project. When Medha Patkar established NBA, all the other groups joined this national coalition of environmental and human rights activists, scientists, academics and project-affected people with a non-violent approach. Medha and her team found that the project's financier, World Bank was aware of the project's disadvantages but was going ahead with the funding. They then started the practice of Dharna. Eventually, the pressure on the World Bank became such that it commissioned the first ever independent review of an ongoing project, the Morse report. The two authors of the report stated that SSP was flawed and that resettlement and rehabilitation of all those displaced by the Projects was not possible under prevailing circumstances. Also, they felt that the environmental impacts of the projects had not been properly considered or adequately addressed and the bank should share responsibility for this situation. The Morse Report triggered the eventual pull-out of the World Bank from the project in 1993.

After the World Bank withdrawal from the project, the development of the SSP took a different turn. While international funding had been withdrawn, it was decided to pursue the implementation of the project with domestic resources. The remainder of the year 1993, after the withdrawal of the World Bank, was marked by the submergence of Manibeli, the first village in Gujarat to be fully drowned by the dam during the 1993 monsoon. Manibeli's submergence coming within a few months of the World Bank's withdrawal led the NBA to step up its campaign by launching a call for *jal samarpan* or sacrifice by drowning. Eventually, in the face of mounting opposition at home and abroad, the Ministry of Water Resources appointed the Five Member Group (FMG), a group of five experts were asked to continue the review discussions initiated during and of June, 1993 on all issues related with the Sardar Sarovar Project'. The FMG's report that was eventually released, after much struggle and involvement from the supreme court, substantially concurred with the Morse Report though in less vigorous terms. From the point of view of the NBA, the withdrawal of the World Bank was both a boon and a challenge. From March 1993 onwards, much less international pressure could be applied on the Central and State governments. Eventually, in view of the difficulties faced in making itself heard, the NBA decided to have recourse to public interest litigation. A petition was filed in 1994 in the Supreme Court. The NBA petition emphasised, among many other things,

the need to involve the locals in the whole process and argued that the NWDT had not considered all relevant issues. These made the project a fundamentally flawed one and the petition requested the supreme court to either stop the project and implement some new features or order the union government to set up an independent tribunal to review the project, with the involvement of the locales. Judicial intervention, from that day, by the Supreme Court has been marked by a series of different stands on the SSP. In May 1994, the Court first declined to stop construction of the dam. A year later, the Court agreed to the suspension of the work on the project and maintained this stance for four years. After 1998, the Court progressively hardened its position. It first authorised the resumption of work on the project in 1999 and eventually, in its main judgment of October 2000, castigated the NBA for having approached the Court too late and gave the government a renewed stamp of approval to complete the project as fast as possible. Another major hiccup in SSP happened in 2006. This happened due to the authorisation given to the construction of an additional 10 metres of the dam up to 121.92 metres in March 2006, which would have led to the displacement of an estimated 17,255 families. The NBA thus organised from 17 March a dharna in New Delhi, first outside the Water Resources Ministry, then at Jantar Mantar. In view of the lack of response of the government, three NBA activists, Bhagwatibehn, Jamsingh Nargave and Medha Patkar, started an indefinite hunger strike. The Supreme Court was given an opportunity to intervene in the matter since a hearing on fresh petitions by oustees was in any case scheduled. On 17 April, the Court refused to stop the construction of the dam but warned it would do so if rehabilitation was found to be inadequate. A separate committee, called the Shunglu committee, was set up for this purpose. The report of the Shunglu Committee given in early July was sympathetic to the claims of the states that the situation is generally satisfactory with regard to resettlement and rehabilitation. Yet, in the subsequent hearing at the Supreme Court on 10 July, a 'compromise' position was adopted. The dam, which had already been built from 110 metres to 119 metres since March 2006, was not to be built up to 120.92 metres until resettlement and rehabilitation at 119 metres was complete. Without any further approval from the Supreme Court in the meantime, the construction of the dam up to 121.92 metres was completed by December 2006.

We have thus looked into the background, formation of NBA and the important occurrences in the movement till now. We will now analyse the existence and impact of such a socialist movement in the Indian society. SSP is a project that will leave its imprint in development debates, whether expected benefits are eventually delivered or not. The SSP saga has forced activists to rethink the development contribution that can be expected from dams. On a smaller note, I want to add that big dams have started to claim themselves 'modern' and therefore, in principle, superior to other small solutions that could bring similar economic development. In the twenty-first century, the threat of global warming that has become one of the most politically sensitive environmental problems – while not the most severe environmental issue for most developing countries at present – has provided a new rationale for dam building since dams provide greenhouse gas-free power. Big dams are thus being proposed as modern solutions to a question of economic development (power generation) and an environmental problem (climate change). Given the focus on the economic development, any remedial measure required by the construction of a dam such as resettlement and rehabilitation of oustees and environmental remedial measures used to be seen largely as costs. This made it difficult to perceive the problem of displacement of people as a human rights problem. Rehabilitation, according to the constitution, not only includes provision of food, cloth and shelter but also support to

rebuild lives. However, the sad fact remains that the 'cost' mentality still seems to predominate and the state is ready to shirk its responsibilities to oustees to ensure successful implementation of the physical works.

The whole concept of development inevitably includes benefits and losses. And to proceed with the work of development, the state acquires properties of individuals or groups in the name of public good. However, it can be seen that the interests of the displaced who are by and large so called underdeveloped people and those of urbanised and modern people who will benefit from the project are at crossheads. Therefore the common good now changes to greater common good. This implies that the common good of certain sections of society is put over and above of certain other sections of society. The state in the present case has ceased to be representative of all sections of society and has reduced to represent interests of merely elite sections of society. Also there lies discrimination among those who are being displaced and between displaced and beneficiaries. Vast majority of people who will derive benefits out of this project are not paying anything. All the necessary sacrifices are being made by only one-section of society. Even the people, who are sacrificing or are being forced to do so, are not treated equally. Madhya Pradesh has admitted before the court that it cannot give any land to displacees. In the case of Narmada Valley project, people are being thrown out of their homes; their culture is being destroyed against their will, short of having any say in the policymaking. It can be argued that the political obligation is owed to one's own fellow citizens, to participate in the conduct of public affairs and to highlight the prevailing injustices in the society. A political obligation should be an obligation to help improve the quality of collective life and to create conditions which are conducive for other citizens to exercise their rights. Subscribing to the above idea it is crystal clear that Narmada Bachao Andolan in this respect have been carrying out its mandate in terms of political obligation. This Andolan has with the help of press, media, dharnas, rallies been successful in attracting the attention of not only of people living in India but those of abroad. This movement is no more limited to get fair resettlement package for oustees of Sardar Sarovar Project but has posed a great question mark upon the wisdom of such multi-purpose dams or development project. The action of Medha Patekar and her group of highly intellectual people are a result of their awareness of being members of a community. Till now the philosophy of Narmada Bachao Andolan of "dubenge par hatenge nahin" (We are ready to drown and give our lives, but we wont move from here untill justice prevails) has been of more of Gandhian kind of civil disobedience. Its no more a hidden fact that the government is using all means it can to suppress the movement. Infact, there is a wide-spread rumour that a politician had uttered these words: " Leave this place for your own good or else we will deploy the army to make sure you leave". So, under such circumstances, its my opinion that it wont be a big mistake for the locals to use other means of fighting.

It is true that all the development projects cannot be brought to halt, however it has become necessary to put much more thought into the planning process, so that displacement can be kept to the absolute minimum. Wherever the situation like Narmada valley project arises, where the development would inevitably cause displacement of people in general and tribals in particular from their ancestral homes, it would not be advisable for the state to adhere to the kind of apathetic attitude to which it has stuck till now. Developmental projects and dams are generally taken up for the generation of income, power, employment, improvement of living standards of people but on the contrary if communities uprooted from their traditional places are not rehabilitated properly, this raises the question of what kind of development and for whose development the state is pursuing its policies. The barbaric attitude,

adopting to which the state has been acting as an agent of elite, modern sections of society, delegitimises its authority and gives the impression of it being of Marxian state in the 21st century which has alienated itself from the people, which in turn, gives right to people for not being obligated to it and to express their dissent.

Conclusion: A deep analysis of the situation at hand implies the existence of gross inequalities. Large numbers of poor and underprivileged communities are being dispossessed of their livelihood and even their ways of living to make way for dams being -built on the basis of incredibly dubious claims of "greater good" and "national interest". The struggle over the river Narmada shows how if we, THE PEOPLE , come together and shout our opinions, it will make the government think and reconsider their policies, which were based on the vested interests of a few people. This struggle over Narmada holds a mirror to our national face and challenges our commitment to professed ideals of justice, equality and democracy.

Another well-known example of women's long-lasting involvement in environment is the Greenbelt Movement, Kenya. Launched on Earth Day 1977 by the National Council of Women, this environmental campaign resulted in the mobilization of thousands of women planting indigenous trees. The Movement has created a national network of 6,000 village nurseries, designed to combat creeping desertification, restore soil health and protect water catchment areas. The 50,000 women members of the Movement have planted about 20 million trees. The movement has always sought to address issues of gender disparities, and food security in combination with environmental protection. The movement's work has spread to other countries through the Pan-African Green Network (Maathai, 2003). As Wangari Maathai, founder of the Green Belt Movement stated, "Implicit in the act of planting trees is a civic education, a strategy to empower people and to give them a sense of taking their destiny into their own hands, removing their fear..."

In Brazil, the women's organisation Ação Democrática Feminina Gaúcha (ADFG) was founded in 1964. Its main objective was to promote social change for equal opportunities. It emphasized educational work with girls and women, especially in poor urban areas. Since 1974, another important issue has been added to ADFG's agenda: environmental protection. Its projects and campaigns began to oppose chemical-based agriculture, and lobby for environmental protection laws. ADFG has developed into Friends of the Earth-Brazil, one of the most important environmental organisations in the country. Women and men in the organization fought together for ecological justice and sustainable development. (Dankelman & Davidson, 1988)

In Eastern Europe it is primarily the pollution of the environment and its impacts on human health that has fuelled women's environmental activism. These movements have been one of the major drivers of democratization processes in the region over the past decades.

“Individual leaders and collective action

Women's leadership in environmental matters is reflected in the fact that women take on major environmental issues and seek drastic solutions. Organized women's groups are fighting against deforestation, pollution and other forms of environmental degradation. There are also an increasing number of women's groups and unique self-help projects regenerating the environment. Often a woman takes the lead in such campaigns. And individual leaders often become role models for natural leadership and a source of inspiration for a wide range of women. As Estelle Angelinas said, "An example of the role of women in decision making here was during the last administration. Then the prime minister had placed a woman as

minister of the environment. During those years, many changes took place” (Estelle Angelinas, Greece; in: UNEP/DAW, 2005).

Individual women have played crucial roles in enhancing public awareness and political will for environmental protection and conservation: Rachel Carson, Donella Meadows, Gauri Devi, Rigoberta Menchú Tum, Gro Harlem Brundtland, Jane Goodall, Wangari Maathai, Anita Roddick, Bella Abzug and Noreena Hertz, just to mention a few.

The commitment, courage, resilience and patience of millions of individual and organized women, - scientists, activists and local rural and urban women - in sustaining the environment is amazing. Day after day they perform their communities’ productive and reproductive tasks, or inform the world community about the need for environmental conservation. They sustain the interface between the human and physical environment, thereby demonstrating a deep understanding and technical knowledge about the ecological characteristics of their environment:

If we only look in the field of biodiversity, numerous examples are available about women’s knowledge of local ecosystems and species, and their commitment and practices to conserve these. Particularly indigenous women, in all regions of the world, are custodians of local biodiversity. Ruth Lilongula from the Solomon Islands noted, “Biodiversity is the very core of our existence within our communities. You cannot say how many dollars this is worth because it is our culture and our survival. In this context biodiversity is invaluable... We value our surroundings as our identity, as who we are and our inheritance that is given to us...Our environment is many things, a classroom, a pharmacy, and a supermarket.” (UNEP/IT, 1999)

International, regional, national and local women’s environment organizations have been established since the 1980s. They became important catalysts in empowering women and bringing a gender perspective in sustainable development. It is often through these organisations that women’s voices are speaking out against environmental destruction and for a peaceful and healthy planet. International groups such as the Women’s Environment and Development Organisation (WEDO), have followed the international development agenda closely, and tried to influence it through their advocacy work. *The Women’s Action Agenda for a Peaceful and Healthy Planet 2015*, developed in preparation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg, 2002, adds a holistic perspective to the policy arena: with emphasis on the relationships between the global economic and political forces, the social arena, cultural aspects and ecological circumstances.

Since the early 1990s particular thematic networks have been formed and developed in centres of expertise, such as the Gender and Water Alliance, ENERGIA (working on gender and sustainable energy), the Gender and Climate Change Network, Diverse Women for Diversity (working on gender and biodiversity). These groups are not only instrumental in promoting the integration of gender into specific sectors, but also in shaping the very nature and contents of policies. Like Bella Abzug (1920-1998) remarked so eloquently: “Women do not want to be mainstreamed into a polluted stream. They want the stream to be clean and healthy.”

²
Ecofeminism is seen as the connection of the environmental movement and the feminism movement. It is one of the only movements that combine multiple social movements. Ecofeminism works to end all forms of oppression, whether it is by gender, race, class, nature, or the earth. Ecofeminists work to show the interconnections between all of these subjects and how positive relationships will better all of those involved. The reason that the

term includes feminists is that the movement uses gender equality as a starting point for working to end oppression. Because of close ties of nature and spirituality, goddess worship and the divine female are often tied to ecofeminism. Academics and activists like Vandana Shiva (India), Ariel Salleh (Australia), Maria Mies (Germany) and Gloria Goldstein (USA) are often seen as important representatives from ecofeminism. (www.EcoFem.org) Critics, like Rosi Braidotti (1994) and Bina Agarwal (1998) argue that ecofeminism has focused too much on ideological arguments and failed to address power and economic

² The term ‘ecofeminism’ was coined by the French feminist Francois d’Eaubonne in 1974. 5 differences which also contribute to differentiation among women, and that ecofeminists also tend to overestimate the idea of harmonious, ecological, and traditional societies.

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