

Quadrant II – Transcript and Related Materials

Programme: Bachelor of Science (First Year)

Subject: Botany

Course Code: BOG 101

Course Title: Environmental Biotechnology

Unit: 8 – Public participation for environmental protection

Module Name: Environmental movement and peoples participation with special references to Gandhamardan, Chilka and Narmada Bachao Andolan

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Environmental Movement

Environmental Movement is a social or political movement, for the conservation of environment or for the improvement of the state of the environment. Environmental movements favour the sustainable management of natural resources.

Major Environmental Movements in India

Some of the major Environmental Movements in India are:

- Gandhamardan Movement
- Chilka Movement
- Narmada Bachao Andolan
- Chipko Movement
- Silent valley Movement, etc.

Gandhamardan Movement

Gandhamardan in western Odisha, is one of the bauxite rich hill ranges. This region is regarded by tribals and peasants as their mother who provides them with food, firewood, fodder and also water for cultivation and drinking purposes. The Gandhamardan mountain ranges are a rich source of diversity for medicinal plants. These hills carry an estimated bauxite deposit of 213 million tons covering an area of 9.6 sq.km. BALCO (Bharat Aluminium Company) had a

plan for mining the Gandhamardan hills. BALCO had promised railway lines, hospitals, schools & employment for the local people, plantation under social forestry & a royalty of one crore to the State. But this project would uproot about 1 lakh farmers and fishermen, and turn the entire area into a barren land free of human life and habitation.

In the initial days BALCO butchered around 60,000 trees for the construction of road and ropeway. The Durgei stream irrigating 200 acres of land was affected due to the construction of a minor irrigation project on the stream to supply drinking water to BALCO Township. All hill rivers had already gone dry due to developmental activities & soon will turn desert if BALCO is not prevented.

The blasting of hills brought cracks in Khandei Jharan canal and silted the agriculture land. The villagers realised that BALCO has betrayed the local inhabitant's faith in the modernization process, and also planned to take away their natural resources. As a result of which, local leadership started with the tribals and peasants. Gandhamardan Suraksha Yuva Parishad (GSYP) was formed.

The movement has shown the path that people if united can built and rebuilt environment friendly development through their collective endeavour.

Chilka Movement

Chilka movement was started in early 1990's by fishermen living around Chilka Lake in Orissa. They resisted the implementation of Integrated Shrimp Farm Project (ISFP). Chilka is Asia's largest and world's second largest lagoon. The highly productive Chilka Lagoon eco-system with its rich fishery resources sustains the livelihood for many fishermen who live in and near the lagoon.

During the late 1980s there was increase in the worldwide shrimp industry. This was a golden opportunity for Indian industrialists and politicians.

In 1986, the government of Odisha entered into an agreement with the TATA to open a large aquaculture unit. It was a joint venture agreed upon by the Tata Iron and Steel Company and Government of Orissa for intensive prawn cultivation and export and possessing 400 hectares of land in Chilka for prawn cultivation for a period of 15 years. The project was a direct threat to the livelihood of fishing communities living around the lake.

The fishermen were supported in their struggle by the non-fishermen (mostly farmers), students, intellectuals, and human rights activists. They also involved

the Chilika Matsyajibi Mahasangha (CMM), a mass organisation, which works towards the protection of interests of the fishermen. The Chilka Bachao Andolan (CBA) was formally launched in January 1992 to work as an extension of CMM.

Environmental concerns raised:

- Threat of water logging due to the construction of the embankment on the canal that forms the outlet of the Lake to sea.
- During breeding season, the embankment would obstruct the movement of the fish and prawn.
- The availability of fish in the future would be affected due to the pollution caused by chemicals and pesticides.

The movement criticized the policies of the government. Certain concerns raised were:

- To whom does the Chilka Lake belong? its people or the state?
- What happens to the livelihoods of local fishermen if big corporates enter the fisheries business in Chilka Lake?

The government was forced to accept that it must correct its decision-making processes with sensitivity towards its poor.

Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA)

NBA is a movement against a number of large dams being built across the **Narmada** river. It was headed by native tribals, farmers, environmentalists and human rights activists. Narmada is one of the largest westward-flowing river of India, flowing through the states of Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. It flows through lovely forested hills, rich agricultural plains and narrow rocky valleys. More than twenty one million people live in the valley, mostly in villages.

Narmada River Valley Project is one of the largest water projects in the world started in the year 1979. It includes the construction of 30 big, 135 medium and 3,000 small dams on the Narmada and its tributaries. The **World Bank** provided financial assistance for the massive projects.

The two principal mega dams are the **Sardar Sarovar Dam** and the **Narmada Sagar Dam**.

The project also promised to provide employment, to check floods, supply water for domestic & industrial use & promote tourism.

The project lacked proper planning as it involved

- a large-scale exploitation of natural resources
- threatening to submerge the vast areas of forest and agricultural land.

The construction of dams and reservoirs will displace estimated one million people and will submerge 350,000 hectares of forest land and 200,000 hectares of agricultural land. The movement first started as a protest for not providing proper rehabilitation and resettlement for the people have been displaced by the construction of Sardar Sarovar Dam. Later on, the movement turned its focus on the preservation of the environment and the eco- systems of the valley.

The struggle started in 1985, relied on hunger strikes, rallies & mass media publicity to spread awareness of the issue.

In 1989, it became a full-fledged environmental and livelihood movement. Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA) was formed by activist Medha Patkar. NBA consists of human activist, farmers, adivasis, and people established on the bank of Narmada river.

It turned into the International protest, gaining support from NGO'S all around the globe. The withdrawal of World Bank funding was a moral victory for the movement.

Narmada Movement justifies the fact that an environmental movement can go beyond social and cultural cleavages since it touched the human survival.