

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 people's participation with special references to Chipko and Silent valley movement

Name of the Presenter: Arati K. Talauliker

Environmental Movement

A social or political Movement, for the conservation or for the improvement of state of 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.

Chipko Movement

Movement by villagers particularly women in the 1970s to resist the deforestation attempt on the hill slopes in the name of developmental programme of the area. *Chipko* means “to hug” or “to cling to” and reflects the demonstrators primary tactic of embracing the trees to prevent the loggers. The movement originated in the Garhwal Himalayan region of Uttarakhand in 1973 and quickly spread throughout the Indian Himalayas. The region is known

for its fragile ecology, often prone to earthquakes, erosive rivers and steep valleys that are least favourable for agriculture. The villagers depended heavily on the forests for food, fodder, fuel, etc. With the conclusion of the Sino-Indian border conflict in 1963, Uttar Pradesh experienced growth in development, especially in the rural Himalayan regions. The interior roads built for the conflict attracted many foreign-based logging companies that sought access to the region's vast forest resources.

The government policy prevented the villagers from managing the lands and denied them access to the lumber. Deforestation in the hills led to lower agricultural yields, erosion, depleted water resources & increased flooding. The village women found it difficult in collecting the necessary fodder and fuel.

Sunderlal Bahuguna an environmentalist enlightened the villagers by conveying the importance of trees. In 1964 environmentalist Chandi Prasad Bhatt founded a organization - Dasholi Gram Swarajya Sangh later renamed Dasholi Gram Swarajya Mandal (DGSM). DGSM encouraged small industries for rural villagers, using local resources. Industrial logging was linked to the severe monsoon floods that killed more than 200 people in the region in 1970. DGSM became a force of opposition against the large-scale industry. The first Chipko protest occurred near the village of Mandal in the upper Alaknanda valley in April 1973. The villagers were denied access to a small number of trees to build agricultural tools but government allotted a much larger plot to a sporting goods manufacturer. When their appeals were denied, Chandi Prasad Bhatt led villagers into the forest and embraced the trees to prevent logging.

After many days of the protests, the government cancelled the company's logging permit and granted the original allotment requested by DGSM. DGSM workers and Sunderlal Bahuguna, began to share Chipko's tactics with people in other villages.

One of the next major protests occurred in 1974 near the village of Reni, where more than 2,000 trees were scheduled to be felled. The government commanded the men of the surrounding villages to a nearby city, to allow the loggers to proceed without confrontation. However, they were met with the women of the village, led by Gaura Devi, who refused to move out of the forest and eventually forced the loggers to withdraw.

Small groups of women kept constant vigilance and hugged the trees in order to prevent the felling. The movement was a much successful one. The action in Reni prompted the state government to investigate deforestation in the valley and ultimately led to a 10-year ban on commercial logging in the area.

This incident gave the movement a further momentum to mobilise all the villages in the region to protest against the commercial felling of trees.

Between 1972 and 1979, more than 150 villages were involved with the Chipko Movement. The movement's major success came in 1980, when an appeal from Bahuguna to Prime Minister resulted in a 15-year ban on commercial felling in the Uttarakhand Himalayas.

Similar bans were enacted in Himachal Pradesh and the former Uttaranchal. This became a turning point in the history of eco-development struggles in the region and around the world.

Silent Valley Movement

Silent Valley Movement was a social movement focused on the protection of Silent valley. Silent Valley, an evergreen tropical forest in the Palakkad district of Kerala which is a home to numerous species native to the territory. In 1970, the Kerala State Electricity Board (KSEB) proposed a hydroelectric dam across the Kunthipuzha river that runs through Silent Valley.

In the same year, the Kerala Forest Research Institute (KFRI) conducted a study on the possible impact of the project on the forests in the area. The study concluded that the project would completely destroy the evergreen rain forests in Silent Valley and submerge around 8.3 sq km of the forest. The Silent Valley movement was started in 1973 by an NGO led by Kerala Sasthra Sahithya Parishad (KSSP) to save the Silent Valley from being flooded by a hydroelectric project. Several NGOs strongly opposed the project and urged the government to abandon it.

In 1981, bowing to unrelenting public pressure, it was declared that Silent Valley will be protected. In November 1983 the Silent Valley Hydroelectric Project was called off. In 1985, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi formally inaugurated the Silent Valley National Park.