

Quadrant II – Notes

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CHIPKO ANDOLAN

Primarily it was a forest conservation movement in India and can be considered a women's movement.

Its success influenced many environmental and eco-groups all over the world.

Chipko means 'embrace', (the villagers hugged the trees to prevent felling).

The movement:

- slowed down deforestation,
- exposed vested interests,
- increased ecological awareness, and
- demonstrated the power of the people.

In India, the issues of tribal and marginalized people also began to be addressed.

The original 'Chipko movement' was started around 1730 in Rajasthan by the Bishnoi community. Led by a lady, Amrita Devi, 363 people from 84 villages laid down their lives in an effort to protect the *khejri* trees (considered sacred by the community) from being felled on the orders of the Maharaja of Jodhpur. After this incident, the Maharaja gave a strong royal decree preventing the cutting of trees in all Bishnoi villages.

The first Chipko action took place spontaneously in April 1973, when the villagers demonstrated against felling of ash trees in Mandal forest.

- The Forest Department had turned down the Dasholi Gram Swarajya Sangh's (DGSS) annual request for ten ash trees for its farm tools workshop, and instead awarded a contract for 300 ash trees in the village of Mandal to a sporting goods manufacturer to make tennis racquets.

- The Sangh workers protested against the policies of the Forest Department and the contract was eventually cancelled.
- In March 1974, 27 tribal women under the leadership of Gaura Devi confronted the loggers who came to cut down 2500 trees. When their talks failed and the loggers began to abuse and threaten the women, the women hugged the trees and kept an all-night vigil.
- This protest was also successful and the permit was cancelled.
- In October 1977, the Adwani forests were set for auctioning. Sundarlal Bahuguna, an environmentalist and a Gandhian activist Bahuguna fasted in protest but in vain.
- In December 1977, the Adwani forests were scheduled to be felled but large groups of women led by Bachhni Devi came forward to save the forests.
- It was here that the ecological slogan "*What do the forests bear? soil, water, and pure air*" was born.
- The men returned on 1st February 1978 with two truckloads of the armed police but already each tree was being guarded by three embracing volunteers.
- In December 1978 a large felling was planned in the Badiyargarh area.
- Mr. Bahuguna started a fast unto death at the felling site. On the eleventh day of his fast he was arrested in the middle of the night and taken to jail. But the people remained in the forests and guarded the trees till the contractors withdrew.
- The Chipko demand for declaration of the Himalayan forests as *protection forests* instead of *production forests* for commercial exploitation was recognized at the highest policy-making level.
- The late Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, after meeting with Bahuguna, issued a directive for a 15-year ban on commercial green felling in the Himalayan forests of Uttar Pradesh.

APPIKO ANDOLAN

The Apiko Movement (appiko – Kannada word for hugging) was inspired by the 1973 Chipko movement. Panduranga Hegde along with the men, women and children of Salkani village in Sirsi ‘hugged the trees’ in Kalase forest, creating new awareness all over southern India.

In 1950, forest covered more than 81% of Uttara Kanara district.

The government, declared this forest district a "backward" area, then initiated the process of "development" by setting up:

- a pulp and paper mill,
- a plywood factory and
- a chain of hydroelectric dams to harness the rivers.

These industries over exploited the forest resources and the dams submerged huge-forest and agricultural areas.

- By 1980, the forest cover of the district was reduced to a mere 25%.
- In 1984, the forest cover of Kerala, which comprises 42% of the entire Western Ghat area, fell from 44 % in 1905 to a meagre 9%.

The removal of the forest cover can lead to laterization i.e. the land gets converted into rocky mountains. It will take centuries for trees to grow again on that land.

The 30 years of 'developmental' activities exhausted this fragile resource system. There were recurring droughts in Karnataka, Maharashtra, Kerala and Tamil Nadu, thus the power generation, water supply and ultimately the whole economy of southern India was adversely affected.

Success Story of the Movement:

- 1) The State government has banned felling of green trees in some forest areas.
 - The movement has spread to the four hill districts of Karnataka Province, and has the potential to spread to the Eastern Ghats in Tamil Nadu and to Goa.
- 2) The Movement involved the participation of the villagers:
 - Planting of indigenous, fast-growing species of trees on denuded lands.
 - Protection of the land from grazing, lopping and fire.
- 3) The activists have constructed 2,000 fuel-efficient chulhas which save fuel wood consumption by almost 40 percent. These chulhas are installed even in hotels. Those who can afford are building bio-gas plants.

The Movement continues to meet its objectives: (three major areas).

- to save the remaining tropical forests in the Western Ghats.
- to restore the greenery to denuded areas and
- to propagate the idea of rational utilization to reduce the pressure on forest resources.

NARMADA BACHAO ANDOLAN

Background:

Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA) was an Indian social movement by native tribals (adivasis), farmers, environmentalists and human rights activists led by Medha Patkar, a social activist, against the construction of large dam across the Narmada River.

- Narmada is India's largest west flowing river which flows through the States of Madhya, Maharashtra and Gujarat.
- It supports a large variety of people with distinguished cultures and traditions ranging from the indigenous (tribal) people that inhabit the jungles to a large number of the rural population.
- It was decided to build 30 major, 135 medium, and 3000 small dams, including the Sardar Sarovar Dam in Gujarat which is one of the biggest dams on the river. It was assumed that it would provide water to about forty million people as well as irrigation and electricity to people in the region.

The Issue:

The proposed Sardar Sarovar and Narmada Sagar dams would displace more than 2,50,000 people. The NBA was fighting for the resettlement or the rehabilitation of these people.

- In 1985 it was found that the project did not fulfil the basic environmental conditions and lacked completion of crucial studies and plans required for the construction of the dam. The people who would be affected by the construction of the dam were not consulted.
- The NDA conducted several non-violent protests including fasting.

Objective of the Movement:

The NBA sought to stop the construction of the Sardar Sarovar Dam.

- Patkar's actions including a 22-day fast forced the World Bank to independently review of the project by setting up the Morse Commission.
- The report clearly showed that the Bank's policies on environment and resettlement were being violated by the project.

Result of the Movement:

- The World Bank stopped financing the project in 1993.
- The court ruled an immediate stoppage of work at the dam and directed the concerned States to complete the rehabilitation and replacement process.
 - It deliberated on this issue further for several years and finally upheld the Tribunal Award and allowed the construction, subject to certain conditions.
 - The court introduced a mechanism to monitor the progress of resettlement while at the same time raising height of the dam.

Final decision:

The construction of the Sardar Sarovar Dam allowed to begin again in 1999 and was declared finished in 2006. It was inaugurated in 2017 by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The height has also been increased from 138 meters to 163 meters.

Current Status:

Medha Patkar continues to fight for proper rehabilitation of the displaced people in Madhya Pradesh as well as for the compensation as promised by the Narmada Tribunal.

Reflection:

- This movement has put forth various notions of development.
- The Indian government has often argued and justified its construction saying that the benefits derived from the Narmada Project, outweigh the cost of displacements.
- The NBA, on the other hand has argued no matter how large the benefits, the cost to the society cannot be fulfilled.

SILENT VALLEY MOVEMENT

Introduction and Background:

Silent Valley Movement was influenced by the Chipko Andolan.

In Kerala, there was public awareness of the harmful effect of development on the environment as well as on the socio-economic life of the future generations.

So when in 1976 the Kerala State Electricity Board announced plans to begin the construction of a 240 MW hydroelectric project over the Kunthipuzha river, it triggered a wave of protests across the State.

Significance:

Silent Valley, situated in the Palghat district contains India's last stretch of the only 50 million year old tropical evergreen forest, and has,

- A record of about 50 million years of evolution.
- About 108 varieties of Orchids and 21 newly discovered flowering plants.
- A repository of medicinal plants, with 80 per cent of the drug listed in standard Pharmacopoeias and 66 per cent of the species and aromatic plants used world over.
- A variety of endemic species and is a valuable source of some genetic variants.
- 23 mammalian species, including three endangered species like the Tiger, Lion-tailed Macaque, and Nilgiri Langur has been recorded.

A High Profile Movement:

- The Movement involved well acclaimed organisations/committees e.g.
- Kerala Shastra Sahitya Parishad, a voluntary organisation to promote scientific temperament.
- National Committee on Planning and Coordination (NCEPC).
- Kerala Natural History Society and Bombay Natural History Society.
- People's Science Movement (PSM)
- Committees appointed by the Central and State Governments such as the Dr. M. S. Swaminathan Committee and Dr. M.G.K. Menon Committee.
- Teachers, scientists and eminent persons from the field of literature.

The Victory:

- The debate on the proposed development went on for a long time and survived the tenures of two Prime Ministers until at last in 1983, the then Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi advised the State to abandon the project and she announced Silent Valley as a National Park.
- In 1985 Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi gifted the National Park to the nation.