

## ANALYZING IDEOLOGICAL TRENDS IN INDIAN ENVIRONMENTALISM

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### **Introduction:**

Environment provides and satisfies all the needs of man and other fellow earthlings. With the gradual expansion of *noosphere* the environmental quality of the planet has been going down. The question is why? On the contrary the trend should have been reverse. The answer is man has utilized his knowledge for unsustainably tapping nature's resources and this has led to *resource disparity*. The resource, illiteracy of development planning, the claim are directly responsible for the impoverishment of the resource base and of the millions of rural people who depend on it (JVA, 1990). The financially affluent sector of the society has been enjoying the lion's portion of the resources at the cost of difficulties of the comparatively financially hindered sections of the society with the help of both money and man-power.

Inequitable resource distribution has been going on in the so called civilized society since long. The suffering section of the society when saturated with dissatisfaction has turned their dissatisfactions into indignations which has given way to various environmental movements throughout the world. These movements were based on several ideologies. Often the sort of ideology has played a key role in the outcome of the movement. Initially it was believed that the evils of capitalism can be well dealt and tackled with socialistic movements and outlooks. But it has been observed that in several instances the socialistic tools have proved to be inadequate in dealing with the contemporary problems facing the industrial society. In this vision radical ecology may be inheriting the political mantle of socialism but at the same time it rests on a paradigm shift that opposes it to both socialism and the common enemy, capitalism (Capra and Spretnak 1984; Porrit 1984).

Indian environmentalism has been motivated by three ideologies viz. *Gandhian ideology*, *Marxian philosophy* and *Neo-ideology* as discussed below.

### **Research questions:**

1. Is socialism the solution to capitalism which in long run would resolve environmental and resource related disputes?
2. What are the ideologies guiding the environmental movements in India?

**Objectives of study:**

1. We wish to analyze and comprehend the root cause of environmental movements in India.
2. To draw relevant inferences and conclusions.

**The ideologies behind various environmental movements in India has been classified as follows:****1. Gandhian ideology:**

Under the light of Gandhian ideology *lack of morality* has been identified as the root cause of environmental quality degradation and associated social conflicts. Present day Indian society has whole heartedly accepted the ideologies of materialism and cheap consumerism which has made man wasteful. Gandhian ideology stresses on the fact that it's time for India to reject and abandon western models of economic growth and return to our traditional cultural roots. Only if we return and stick to precapitalistic society can social and ecological harmony be achieved. The Crusading Gandhians have sharply attacked the stranglehold of modernist philosophies – particularly those upholding rationalism and economic growth-on the Indian intelligentsia; through the written and spoken word, they propagate an alternative, non-modern philosophy whose roots lie in Indian tradition (Bahuguna, 1983; Nandy, 1987, 1989; Shiva, 1988).

**2. Marxian philosophy:**

The Marxian philosophy stresses on the fact that *unequal access to resources* is the main reason behind environmental degradation and social conflicts. Here the problem of environmental degradation is viewed under the light of politics and economics. The rich and the poor both destroy nature. The rich do so to satisfy their greed and luxury and in hot pursuit of cheap profits. On the contrary the poor destroy nature just to survive. The survival emissions of a poor Indian villager can never be compared to the luxury emissions from the sports car of a rich man. The Marxian philosophy hence emphasizes that in order to achieve social and ecological harmony a just society has to be created first. Ecological Marxists can be distinguished from Gandhians in two significant respects: their unremitting hostility to tradition (and corresponding faith in modernity modern science) and in their relatively greater emphasis on confrontational movements (KSSP, 1984). In the Indian context the Marxian philosophy has strongly influenced the People Science Movements (PSMs)-the best known of which is the Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad.

### 3. Neo-ideology:

The Gandhian ideology and the Marxian philosophy are the two extremes of ideologies in Indian environmental movements. The principles of neo-ideology occupy a vast middle space between the two aforesaid ideologies. This ideology does not vehemently oppose the industrial society as strongly as the Gandhian ideology does. At the same time it lays a lesser emphasis on confrontational movements as does the Marxian philosophy. To some extent it can be said that neo-ideology is influenced by Western socialism. The neo-ideologists aim to draw a working synthesis between traditional and modern cultures and between Western and Eastern technological traditions. The neo-ideology aims to promulgate resource conservation on the lines of labour intensive and socially liberating technologies. Their emphasis is not so much, pace the Marxists on challenging the 'system'- or pace the Gandhians, the system's ideological underpinnings – as in practice a set of socio-technical alternatives to the centralizing and degrading technologies presently in operation (Bhatt, 1992; Reddy, 1982).

#### **Chipko movement- A case study:**

The movement was born in a small hilly village of the upper reaches of Himalayas. The illiterate tribal women commenced this unique movement in December, 1972 that became famous as the Chipko (means to embrace) movement. The movement commenced in the Tehri-Garhwal district of U.P., that actually gathered momentum in 1978 when the women faced police firing. The women of Advani village in Tehri-Garhwal had tied the sacred thread around trees, actually hugged the trees, faced police firing in Feb, 1978 and later courted arrest. The movement continued under the Shri Sunderlal Bahuguna in various villages like Advani and Budhekar of Tehri-Garhwal.

All three tendencies are represented in that most celebrated of environmental initiatives, the Chipko movement (Guha, 1989). *Sunderlal Bahuguna* is a prominent person associated with the movement whose activities and writings were strongly influenced by the Gandhian ideology. *Uttarakhand Sangharsh Vahini*, a youth organization was enlightened by the Marxian philosophy. They were more confrontational in their approach while dealing with the problems of commercial forestry, illegal and unregulated mining and the illegal liquor trade. The Dashauli Gram Swarajya Mandal was the organization that was driven by the concepts of neo-ideology. They have made commendable contribution in the field of ecological restoration.

#### **Implications of the proposed research:**

1. The critical analysis of the ideologies guiding the environmental movements in India may in the future help to choose the right approach and philosophy towards an environmental movement.
2. The ideologies discussed above will go a long way in determining the differential consumerism patterns in the human society.
3. The concept of “zero jealous” society and its attainment will largely depend on which ideology we select to voice ourselves under a given situation.

### **Conclusion:**

It is evident inequitable resource portioning is the major cause of social grievances which on further aggravation leads to protests and environmental movements. To curb and tackle resource related disparities a civilized society should focus on three aspects- *awareness*, *ethics* and *laws*. All the three aspects are interrelated and without one the circle remains incomplete.

India has developed several legislations in the field of environment. Eg: Water (Prevention and control of pollution) Act, 1974; Air (Prevention and control of pollution) Act, 1981; Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980; Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 etc. the sad part of the story is that in spite of the laws being present their implementation is not satisfactory in every instance. The result is the unsustainable use of resource by the influential sections of the society. This further leads to degradation of the resource quality and quantity.

To prevent such aforesaid discrepancies stronger and greater legal implementations are an absolute necessity. At the same time the present legislations must be upgraded to meet and solve future environmental crisis.

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