

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES

LECTURE-43

Environmental Movements in India

An environmental movement is a type of social movement that involves an array of individuals, groups and coalitions that perceive a common interest in environmental protection and act to bring about changes in environmental policies and practices.

Environmental and ecological movements are among the important examples of the collective actions of several social groups.

Cause of Environmental Movements

- The increasing confrontation with nature in the form of industrial growth, degradation of natural resources, and occurrence of natural calamities, has resulted in imbalances in the bio-spheric system.
- Major reasons for the emergence of environmental movements in India are as follows:
 - Control over natural resources
 - False developmental policies of the government
 - Right of access to forest resources
 - Non-commercial use of natural resources
 - Social justice/human rights
 - Socioeconomic reasons
 - Environmental degradation/destruction and
 - Spread of environmental awareness and media

Major Environmental Movements in India

Many environmental movements have emerged in India, especially after the 1970s. These movements have grown out of a series of independent responses to local issues in different places at different times.

Some of the best known environmental movements in India have been briefly described below:

The Silent Valley Movement

- The silent valley is located in the Palghat district of Kerala.

- It is surrounded by different hills of the State.
- The idea of a dam on the river Kunthipuzha in this hill system was conceived by the British in 1929.
- The technical feasibility survey was carried out in 1958 and the project was sanctioned by the Planning Commission of the Government of India in 1973.
- In 1978, the movement against the project from all corners was raised from all sections of the population.
- The movement was first initiated by the local people and was subsequently taken over by the **Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad (KSSP)**.
- Many environmental groups like the Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA), Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) and Silent Valley Action Forum participated in the campaign.

The Silent Valley Movement – Quick Facts

Year of the Movement	1978
Place	Kerala
Leaders	Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad (KSSP) and local people
Reason/Aim of the Movement	To save the silent valley and its rich biodiversity from the hydroelectric dam project that had been proposed.

Chipko Movement

- Chipko Movement started on April 24, 1973, at Mandal of Chamoli district of Gharwal division of Uttarakhand.
- The Chipko is one of the world-known environmental movements in India.

- The movement was raised out of ecological destabilisation in the hills.
- The fall in the productivity of the forest produces forced the hill dwellers to depend on the market, which became a central concern for the inhabitants.
- Forest resource exploitation was considered the reason behind natural calamities like floods, and landslides.
- On March 27 the decision was taken to 'Chipko' that is 'to hug' the trees that were threatened by the axe and thus the chipko Andolan (movement) was born.
- This form of protest was instrumental in driving away the private companies from felling the ash trees.

Chipko Movement - Quick Facts

Year of the Movement	1973
Place	Uttarakhand
Leaders	Chandi Prasad Bhatt, Sunderlal Bhauguna and others
Reason/Aim of the Movement	To protect the Himalayan forests from destruction

Bishnoi Movement

- This movement was led by Amrita Devi, in which around 363 people sacrificed their lives for the protection of their forests.
- This movement was the first of its kind to have developed the strategy of hugging or embracing the trees for their protection spontaneously.

Bishnoi Movement - Quick Facts

Year of the Movement	1700s
Place	Rajasthan
Leaders	Amrita Devi Bishnoi
Reason/Aim of the Movement	To stop the destruction of the village's sacred trees for building a new palace for the king

Appiko Movement

- It is a movement inspired by the Chipko movement by the villagers of Western Ghats,
- In the Uttar Kannada region of Karnataka, the villagers of Western Ghats started the Appiko Chalewali movement during the month of September – November 1983.
- Here, the destruction of forest was caused due to commercial felling of trees for timber extraction.
- Natural forests of the region were felled by the contractors, which resulted in soil erosion and drying up of perennial water resources.
- In the Saklani village in Sirsi, the forest dwellers were prevented from collecting usufructs like twigs and dried branches and non-timber forest products for the purposes of fuelwood, fodder, honey etc. They were denied their customary rights to these products.
- In September 1983, women and youth of the region decided to launch a movement similar to Chipko, in South India.
- The agitation continued for 38 days, and this forced the state government to finally concede to their demands and withdraw the order for the felling of trees.

Appiko Movement – Quick Facts

Year of the Movement	1983
Place	Karnataka
Leaders	Panduranga Hegde , Villagers of Western Ghats; Women and youth from Saklani and surrounding villages
Reason/Aim of the Movement	To stop cutting trees by the fellers and the contractors of the forest department. The people demanded a ban on the felling of green trees.

Narmada Bachao Andolan

- Narmada is one of the major rivers of the Indian Peninsula.
- The scope of the Sardar Sarovar project, a terminal reservoir on Narmada in Gujarat in fact is the main issue in the Narmada Water dispute.

Narmada Bachao Andolan – Quick Facts	
Year of the Movement	1985
Place	Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra
Leaders	Medha Patkar and other activists
Reason/Aim of the Movement	To question the rationale behind the developmental projects, especially dam

construction across the river.

Jungle Bachao Andolan

- Jungle Bachao Andolan began in the 1980s in the Singhbhum district of Bihar (presently in Jharkhand).
- It was a movement against the government's decision to grow commercial teak by replacing the natural Sal forests.
- The tribal community is the most affected by this decision as it disturbs the rights and livelihood of Adivasis of that region.
- This movement was widely spread in states like Bihar, Jharkhand and Odisha in various other forms.

Jungle Bachao Andolan – Quick Facts

Year of the Movement	1982
Place	Singhbhum district of Bihar (now Jharkhand)
Leaders	Tribals of Singhbhum
Reason/Aim of the Movement	To oppose the government's decision to replace natural Sal forest with commercial teak plantations.