

# Environmentalism

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# Environmentalism

- Environmentalism, political and ethical movement that seeks to improve and protect the quality of the natural environment through changes to environmentally harmful human activities; through the adoption of forms of political, economic, and social organization that are thought to be necessary for, or at least conducive to, the benign treatment of the environment by humans; and through a reassessment of humanity's relationship with nature.
- In various ways, *environmentalism* claims that living things other than humans, and the natural environment as a whole, are deserving of consideration in reasoning about the morality of political, economic, and social policies.

# Intellectual Underpinnings

- Environmental thought and the various branches of the environmental movement are often classified into two intellectual camps: those that are considered anthropocentric, or “human-centred,” in orientation and those considered biocentric, or “life-centred.”
- This division has been described in other terminology as “shallow” ecology versus “deep” ecology and as “technocentrism” versus “ecocentrism.”

<<https://www.britannica.com/topic/environmentalism>>

# Anthropocentrism

- Anthropocentric approaches focus mainly on the negative effects that environmental degradation has on human beings and their interests, including their interests in health, recreation, and quality of life. It is often characterized by a mechanistic approach to nonhuman nature in which individual creatures and species have only an instrumental value for humans.
- The defining feature of *anthropocentrism* is that it considers the moral obligations humans have to the environment to derive from obligations that humans have to each other—and, less crucially, to future generations of humans—rather than from any obligation to other living things or to the environment as a whole. Human obligations to the environment are thus indirect.

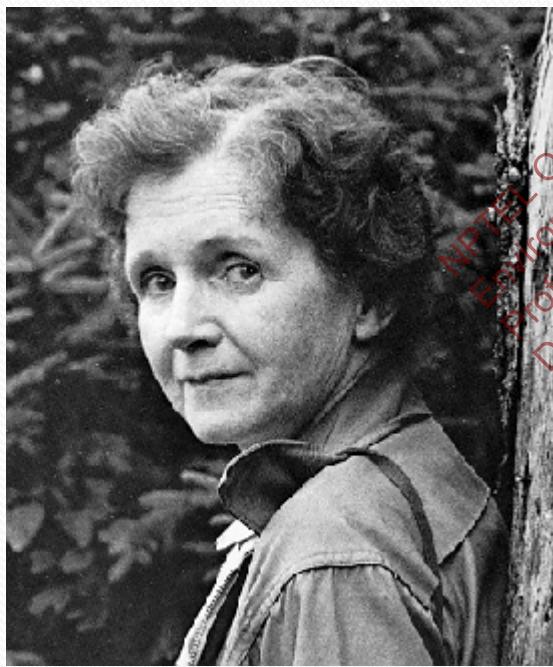
# Biocentrism

- In contrast to anthropocentrism, biocentrism claims that nature has an intrinsic moral worth that does not depend on its usefulness to human beings, and it is this intrinsic worth that gives rise directly to obligations to the environment. Humans are therefore morally bound to protect the environment, as well as individual creatures and species, for their own sake. In this sense, biocentrists view human beings and other elements of the natural environment, both living and often nonliving, as members of a single moral and ecological community.

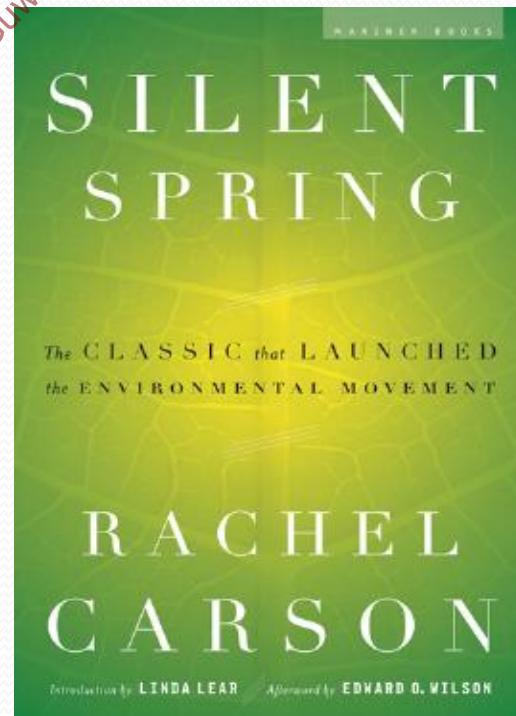
# The New Environmentalism of the 1960s

- Prior to the 1960s, environmentalism focused on preservation of wilderness and conservation of resources.
- The environmental movement flourished in the 1960s in the midst of the Civil Rights, Peace and Women's movements.

American biologist and conservationist Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962) brought to public attention the dangers of environmental pollution to public health, such as the use of DDT, and sparked the beginning of modern environmentalism.



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- ❖ The overarching theme of *Silent Spring* is the powerful—and often negative—effect humans have on the natural world.
- ❖ Carson's main argument is that pesticides have detrimental effects on the environment; she says these are more properly termed 'biocides' because their effects are rarely limited to the target pests.
- ❖ Carson's argues that pesticides and chemicals used to kill pests on crops bleed into the environment and affect water sources. These chemicals are involuntarily ingested by larger creatures when they eat poisoned insects.

- DDT (dichloro-diphenyl-trichloroethane) was developed as the first of the modern synthetic insecticides in the 1940s. It was initially used with great effect to combat malaria, typhus, and the other insect-borne human diseases among both military and civilian populations.
- When an animal consumes food having DDT residue, the DDT accumulates in the tissue of the animal by a process called bioaccumulation. The higher an animal is on the food chain (e.g. tertiary consumer such as seals), the greater the concentration of DDT in their body as a result of a process called biomagnification.

# The New Environmentalism of the 1960s

- As people became more aware of environmental issues, such as air and water pollution, radiation, pesticide poisoning and other problems, they demanded the federal government to take more responsibility.
- Public concern for the environment became clear during the *Earth Day* demonstrations of 1970.



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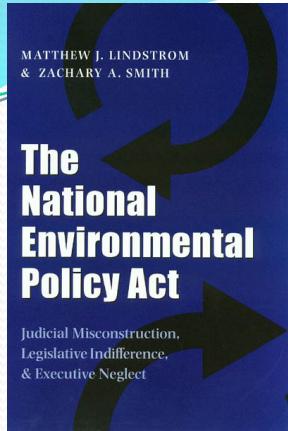


# The New Environmentalism

In response to the environmental movement, several laws emerged to regulate environmental pollution and protect natural resources.

Some of the most important laws that determine how the Mississippi River is managed are:

- The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969
- The Federal Water Pollution Control Act (FWPCA), 1972
- Upper Mississippi River Management Act (UMRMA) of 1986



# National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969

*“The purposes of this Act are: To declare a national policy which will encourage productive and enjoyable harmony between man and his environment; to promote efforts which will prevent or eliminate damage to the environment and biosphere and stimulate the health and welfare of man; to enrich the understanding of the ecological systems and natural resources important to the Nation; and to establish a Council on Environmental Quality.” Sec. 2 [42 USC § 4321].*

# The Federal Water Pollution Control Act (FWPCA), 1972

- The Federal Water Pollution Control Act of 1948 was the first major U.S. law to address water pollution. Growing public awareness and concern for controlling water pollution led to sweeping amendments in 1972. As amended in 1972, the law became commonly known as the Clean Water Act (CWA).
- The Clean Water Act (CWA) establishes the basic structure for regulating discharges of pollutants into the waters of the United States and regulating quality standards for surface waters.

# The resurgence in 1960's

1. Increase in scientific understanding
  - Research, publications
2. Increase in pressure group membership
  - Greenpeace, Amnesty, WWF
3. Increased signs of damage
  - Satellite images, flooding, oil spills, acid rain
4. Increased desire to find solutions
  - Media attention and public interest on rise

# Charting the Influential ...

- Events and Gatherings
- Legislation and Policy
- Publications
- Disasters
- Beginnings of Organisations

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# 1960's

- Rachel Carson's 'Silent Spring' 1962
- Kenneth Boulding's 'Spaceship Earth' 1966
- Paul Ehrlich's 'Population Bomb' 1968
- Friends of the Earth 1969

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# *The Economics of the Coming Spaceship Earth*

## (Kenneth Ewart Boulding, 1966)

- Following the publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* in 1962, the developing environmental movement drew attention to the relationship between economic growth and development and environmental degradation.
- Kenneth Ewart Boulding was an English-born American economist.
- Boulding identified the need for the economic system to fit itself to the ecological system with its limited pools of resources.

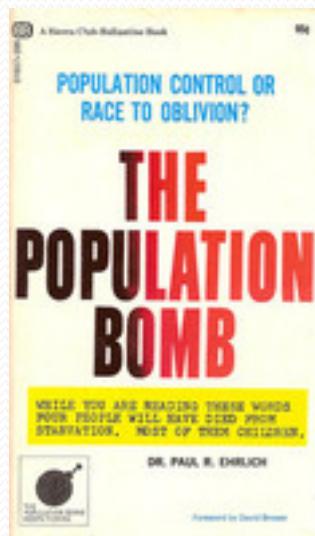
In his book *The Population Bomb* (1968), biologist Paul Ehrlich argued the environmental crises of the past decade could be traced to a single cause: overpopulation. It was a simple “numbers game:” the Earth had too many people and too few resources to support them.

In 6000 B.C. the population was five million. In 1650 A.D. it was 500 million. In 1850 it hit one billion. In 1930 it made two billion. In 1975 it will be four billion.

If nothing interferes with this rate, it would reach 60 million billion by 2400, putting 100 people on every square yard of the earth's surface land and sea.

The point is, something will interfere. If we don't nature will. Our ecosystem can't support our way of life.

Quote in the Michigan Daily about population growth, 1969.



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# 1970's

- First Earth Day 1970
- Greenpeace 1971
- Polluter Pays Principle 'OECD' 1971
- UN Conference on Human Development, 1972
- Worldwatch Institute 1975

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# 1970's Limit's to Growth Debate

Club of Rome Report in 1972, came to two main conclusions:

- (i) If the present trends in growth of population, industrialisation, pollution, food production and resource depletion continued unchanged, the limits to growth on this planet would be reached within the next 100 years.
- (ii) It is possible to alter these growth trends and to establish a condition of ecological and economic stability that is sustainable for the future. (Meadows et al, 1989).

# Ecological Disasters

- 1978: Amoco Cadiz oil spill off the coast of Brittany
- 1979: Three Mile Island Nuclear accident occurs in Pennsylvania

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# 1980's 'The Science'

- Climate Change
  - 1985 'global warming predicted'
  - 1988 IPCC established
- Ozone Depletion
  - 1985 Ozone Hole Discovered
  - 1987 Montreal Protocol adopted

# Sustainable Development

- 1980 World Conservation Strategy

*“Humanity’s relationship with the biosphere (the thin covering of the planet that contains and sustains life) will continue to deteriorate until a new international order is achieved, a new environmental ethic is adopted, human populations stabilised, and sustainable modes of development become the rule rather than the exception .... For development to be sustainable it must take account of social and ecological factors, as well as economic ones; of the living and non-living resource base; and of the long term as well as short term advantages and disadvantages of alternative actions.” (IUCN, 1980, Section 1)*

# Sustainable Development

- 1987 World Commission on Environment and Development
  - Equates sustainable development with progress that “meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” (*Our Common Future*, p.43)

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# 1980's 'The Disasters'

- 1984 - **Bhopal**, India – Union Carbide toxic chemical leak 10,000 dead 300,000 injured
- 1984 - **Ethiopian drought** led to a famine with 250,000 – 1 million dead
- 1986 - **Chernobyl**, toxic radioactive explosion
- 1989 - **Exxon Valdez** dumps 11 million gallons of oil into Prince William Sound in Alaska

# Rise of Green Power in 80's

- Environmental Groups
  - UK membership went from 2 to 5 million between 1980-88
- Green Party
  - gained 15% of vote at European elections in 1989
- John Elkington and Julia Hailes
  - ‘Green Consumer Guide’

# Earth Summit 1992

5 agreements were introduced

1. The Framework Convention on Climate Change
2. The Convention on Biodiversity
3. Agenda 21
4. The Rio Declaration
5. The Forest Principles

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# 1990's 'Business Changes'

- 1992
  - Business Council for Sustainable Development representation at Earth Summit
- 1995
  - Shell linked with death of Ken Saro-Wiwa
  - World Trade Organisation
- 1996 ISO14001 EMS
- 1997 Marine Stewardship Council founded
- 1998 Monsanto GMO crisis
- 1999 Global Sustainability Index

# Summary

- 1960's birth of new consciousness, movement, groups
- 1970's tense battle ground between economists and environmental movement
- 1980's Introduction of sustainable development
- 1990's Realising SD
- 2000's ?

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# Environmental Movement

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# Conservation and preservation

- *Far from being that one place on earth that stands apart from humanity, nature is quite profoundly a human creation—indeed, the creation of very particular human cultures at very particular moments in human history. It is not a pristine sanctuary . . . Instead, it is a product of that civilization, and could hardly be contaminated by the very stuff of which it is made (William Cronon ed., 1996).*

# American Environmentalism

- American environmentalism narratives usually begin with tales of wilderness and the West, whose spectacular landscapes encountered dramatic changes due to urbanization and industrialization. By the 1870s, resource exploitation dominated development patterns in the West.
- Natural resources were devoured by destructive practices in mining, overgrazing, timber cutting, monocrop planting, and speculation in land and water rights.
- To protect America's natural resources, environmental organizations arose in support of conservation and preservation.

# Conservation

- Roots of American environmentalism – philosophies of conservation and preservation
- Conservation groups emphasized the efficient use and development of physical resources to combat inefficient land management. Conservationists put forth a developmental strategy based on efficiency, scientific management, centralized control, and organized economic development.
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# Preservation

- Preservation – American frontier ideology and notions of the environment as defined in terms of wilderness.
- Preservationists, who believed wilderness preservation to be imperiled by the forces of urbanization and industrialization, viewed traditional conservationist strategies of ‘right use’ and efficient land management as promoting industry needs.
- The preservationists’ vision of nature was romanticized by the poems of William Wordsworth and Henry David Thoreau, which analogized wilderness with religious sacredness.

# Growth of Wilderness Idea

- John Muir (1838-1914) also known as “John of the Mountains” and “Father of the National Parks”, was an influential Scottish-American naturalist, and environmental philosopher, who advocate for the preservation of wilderness in the United States of America.
- Muir was a founder and the first president of the Sierra Club.
- He was also involved in the creation of the Grand Canyon, Kings Canyon, Petrified Forest, and Mt. Rainier National Parks.
- Muir's three-night camping trip with President Theodore Roosevelt in 1903 could be considered the most significant camping trip in conservation history.
- Consequently, early environmentalism was not a social movement but rather an attempt by privileged classes to preserve a place for outdoor recreation.

# Aldo Leopold

- Leopold has been the most influential wilderness thinker since Muir
- Aldo Leopold's book *A Sand County Almanac* (1949) is a combination of natural history, scene painting with words, and philosophy. It is perhaps best known for the following quote, which defines his land ethic: "A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community".
- A harmonious relation to land is more intricate, and of more consequence to civilization, than the historians of its progress seem to realize. Civilization is not, as they often assume, the enslavement of a stable and consistent earth. It is a state of mutual interdependent cooperation between human animals, other animals, plants and soils, which may be disrupted at any moment by the failure of any of them. ('The Conservation Ethic', 1933: 652)

## Cont.

- The emergence of ecology has placed the economic biologist in a peculiar dilemma: with one hand, he points out the accumulated findings and of his search for utility, or lack of utility, in this or that species: with the other he lifts the veil from a biota so complex, so conditioned by interwoven cooperations and competitions, that no man can say where utility begins or ends. ('a Biotic View of Land', 1939: 727)

# Muir and Leopold

- Muir displayed in abundance the siege-like mentality of the wilderness lover; Leopold was hostile to any force or form that might disturb the integrity of nature.
- In the view of Leopold, responsible human behaviour *outside* the national parks was perhaps even more important than the protection of wild species within them.
- Leopold urged private landowners to promote a mix of species on their holdings, thereby enhancing soil fertility and maintaining a diverse flora and fauna.
- O'Riordan (1971) describes America's earliest environmentalists as being voices in the wilderness, but ones of great scientific and intellectual ability who were warning against indiscriminate destruction of resources and calling for a reverence of nature.

## The Second Era: The Rise of Modern Environmentalism in the 1960s

- *The most alarming of all man's assaults upon the environment is the contamination of air, earth, rivers and sea with dangerous and even lethal materials. . . . For the first time in the history of the world, every human being is now subjected to contact with dangerous chemicals, from the moment of conception until death (Rachel Carson, Silent Spring, 1962).*

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Modern environmentalism differs from the conservation and preservation era in two salient respects.

- The first era emphasized the protection or efficient management of the natural environment, the primary policy of modern environmentalism is based on the cleanup and control of pollution.
- Modern environmentalism transformed from top-down control by technical and managerial leaders into bottom-up grassroots demands from citizens and citizen groups.

# Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* in 1962

- Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* in 1962 marked the beginning of modern environmentalism. Carson, known as the “godmother of modern environmentalism,” impacted the American public’s consciousness with her detailed exposition on the dangers of environmental pollution to human health.
- By examining the ecological impacts of hazardous substances that pollute both the natural and human environments, like pesticides, Carson fundamentally altered the way Americans perceived the environment and the dangers of toxins to themselves.
- Carson argued that science and technology had been effectively removed from any larger policy framework and insulated from public input and opinion.

- The Environmental Movement differs markedly from other American social movements because it was saddled, from its inception, with conservative traditions (some activists were initially cautious about the association of environmentalism with population control and anti-urban elitism).
- Environmental Movement was precipitated by two major social changes in American culture.
- First, citizens began searching for improved standards of living and amenities, beyond necessities and conveniences, due to increased personal and social “real income.” Rising standards of living allowed Americans to view nature as an essential provider of recreational activities.
- Second, increasing levels of education spawned values associated with personal creativity and self-development, including involvement with the natural environment.
- Both of these societal changes allowed individuals to think broadly about the natural habitat in which they lived, worked, and played.

- By the late 1960s, activists began to link the destruction of the natural environment to the complex interplay of new technology, industry, political power, and economic power.
- Grassroots community groups arose to support family and community autonomy against the powerful institutional forces of corporate industry and government bureaucracy.

# The Third Era: Mainstream Environmentalism

- Our country is stealing from poorer nations and from generations yet unborn . . . We're tired of being told we are to blame for corporate depredations . . . Institutions have no conscience. If we want them to do what is right, we must make them do what is right (Dennis Hayes, 1994)

## Earth Day 1970s

- Earth Day 1970, widely hailed as the beginning of the third era of American environmentalism, directly resulted from the infusion of social values of the 1960s into environmentalism.
- Earth Day 1970 ushered in a new political atmosphere, one reacting against the adverse effects of industrial growth.
- The 1970s also marked the emergence of new issues regarding toxic chemicals, energy, and the possibilities of social, economic, and political decentralization.
- With the establishment of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the passage of a variety of environmental laws and policies in the 1970s, environmental issues themselves became “mainstream.”

# The Fourth Era: Grassroots Environmentalism

- The environmental movement has not been practicing one of the laws of nature: strength in diversity (John Cook, *Environmental Careers Organization*)
- Grassroots environmentalism embraces the principles of ecological democracy, and is distinguished from mainstream environmentalism by its belief in citizen participation in environmental decision making. Perceiving mainstream environmental organizations as too accommodating to both industry and government, grassroots groups utilize “community right-to-know laws, citizen-enforcement provisions in federal and state legislation, and local input in waste clean-up methodology and siting decisions.”

# Environmentalism in the Global South

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## Varieties of Environmentalism: North-South divide

- In the developing world resource exploitation is largely geared to meet the very basic needs of food, fodder, fuelwood and shelter for a large section of the deprived societies.
- Natural resources are often viewed as limitless by the industrialized world (either due to a myopic view of the future or because of the immense faith in technology providing a substitute for the natural resources capital)

# ‘Rich’ and ‘Poor’ Countries

- In affluent countries – reaction against the increased impact of the effluent of affluence (e.g. the environmental justice movement, the anti-nuclear movement)
- In poor countries – the environmentalism of the poor i.e. the defence of livelihood and communal access to natural resources, threatened by the state or by the expansion of market – the reaction against environmental degradation caused by unequal exchange, poverty, population growth.
- There exists a materialist environmentalism in rich countries against the effluents of affluence.

- Environmentalism movements in the North – related to the emergence of a post-materialist or post-industrial society.
- Post-materialism is known as the ‘ecology of affluence’, whereby aesthetic and quality of life concerns become a priority over production and distribution (Gregory et al, 2009: 620).
- Northern environmentalism, relies rather more heavily on the ‘social movement organisation’ – such as the *Sierra Club* or the *Friends of the Earth*.
- The wilderness movement in the North originates outside the production process – calling for a change in attitudes (towards the natural world) rather than a change in systems of production or distribution.

- The *environmentalism of the poor* originates as a clash over productive resources; in Southern movements, issues of ecology are often interlinked with questions of human rights, ethnicity and distributive justice.
- The movement for environmental justice, led by the poor, is not concerned with overabundance, but with the environmental hazards and social and economic inequalities that ravage their communities.
- These impoverished people take the brunt of environmental degradation and furthermore these people “see it, breathe it and drink it themselves” (Brechin & Kempton, 1994:262).

- In May 1979, a young American environmentalist, Mark Dubois chained himself to a boulder in the Stanislaus river in California (Friends of the River – campaign to ‘Save the Stanislaus’ – demanding unspoilt California wilderness)
- In contrast, Medha Patkar and her colleagues hope not only to save the Narmada River itself, tens of thousands of peasants to be displaced by the dam being built on the river.

# Varieties of Environmentalism

- Mark Dubois – the dominant thrust of the environmental movement in the North; and Medha Patkar – strongly highlights the questions of production and distribution within human society.
- ‘No humanity without nature!’ is the epitaph of the Northern environmentalist.
- ‘No Nature without Social Justice!’ is that of the Southern environmentalist.
- Q. Is it possible to translate environmental values into monetary values?

# Ecological distribution conflicts

- Q. What does ecological distribution mean?
- This refers to the social, spatial and temporal asymmetries or inequalities in the use by humans of environmental resources and services, i.e. in the depletion of natural resources (including the loss of biodiversity) and in the burden of pollution.
- For instance, an unequal distribution of land, when coupled with pressure of agricultural exports on limited land resources, may cause degradation by subsistence peasants working on mountain slopes which would be not cultivated so intensively if the land in the valleys were more equally distributed.

- *Environmental racism* in the US means locating polluting industries or toxic waste disposal sites in areas of Black, Hispanic or Indian population. [There ecologically is unequal exchange]
- *Environmental justice* – movements against environmental racism
- *Ecological debt* – claiming damages from rich countries on account of past excessive emissions (of carbon dioxide)
- *Omnivores vs ecosystem people* – the contrast between people living on their own resources and people living on the resources of other territories and peoples.

# **Environmental Movement in the Global South:**

## ***The Livelihood Approach***

- Environmental movements in the Third World has viewed them as essentially actions by the marginalized poor to protect their environmental means of livelihood and sustenance. Environmental resources such as land, water and forests constitute the material basis of the production and reproduction of the economic poor.
- Actions in defence of such resources amid growing encroachment and degradation by the richer and better-off sections of the society are what distinguish Third World Environmentalism from that in the First World.

- According to Redclift (1987: 159):
- The two principal components of environmental movements in the South are of marginal importance to most movements in the developed countries. They are those who constitute the movement are engaged in a livelihood struggle and secondly that they recognize that this livelihood struggle can be successful only if the environment is managed in a sustainable way.

Shiva (1991: 19) locates the Indian environmental movement as a response to the resource and energy-intensive ‘development project’ of the country’s economic elite:

The resource demand of development has led to the narrowing of the natural resource base for the survival of the economically poor and powerless either by direct transfer of resources away from basic needs or by destruction of the essential ecological process that ensure the renewability of the life-supporting natural resources. In the light of this background ecology movements emerged as the people’s response to this new threat to their survival and as a demand for the ecological conservation of vital life-supporting systems.

- The main sites of environmental conflicts in the South are energy and resource-intensive activities and projects such as big dams, commercial forestry, mining, energy-intensive agriculture and mechanized fisheries – projects and activities that threaten and erode the resource base of peasants and other artisanal groups.
- The material as opposed to the symbolic form of expression of southern movements is rooted in the political economy of the South distinctly different from the ‘post-industrial’ North.

Gadgil and Guha (1995) comment, in the developing world:

... environmentalism has its origin in conflicts between competing groups – typically peasants and industry – over productive resources ... [as] the intensification of resource use undermines existing but subsistence oriented economic activities. ... [Here] environmental conflict is for the most part, only another form of economic conflict.

- Unlike the North, the conflicts are not so much over how the environment should be used but over who should use and benefit them (Gadgil and Guha, 1995).
- As Martinez-Alier has noted, in the southern environmental movement the epithet ‘environmental’ is relevant ‘insofar as they express objectives in terms of ecological requirements for life’ (cited in Peet and Watts, 1996: 3)

Thus one can argue that it is not as much life-styles as life chances that constitute the battleground of environmental politics in the South.

# Actors, Practices and Issues

- Issues cover such as deforestation, water quality, depletion of indigenous resources, human settlement and threat to public health, toxic contamination and atmospheric pollution.
- Mobilization denote struggles for protecting environmental conditions of livelihoods and sustenance of directly affected local communities [Environmental mobilization involves actors other than local communities and actions other than those geared towards defensive pursuits of livelihood

**Table 1 Environmental Movements in the South: Popular Cases**

Movements	Issues	Actions	Actors	Ideals
Chipko Movement (India)	Deforestation and commercial logging in the Himalayan foothills; local people's rights to resources.	Hugging of trees; Satyagraha; eco-restoration; local projects for resource harvesting; national and international lobbying.	Local communities; women; local activists and organizations.	Gandhian; Marxist; local resource control and management.
Chico Dam Movement (Philippines)	Eviction due to the construction of the dam; right to ancestral domain and cultural integrity; self-government.	Militant and armed resistance followed by a phase of peaceful protest.	Local Igorot people; Catholic church; new people's army; national environmental groups.	Marxist; cultural and political rights.
Rubber Tappers Movement (Brazil)	Evictions due to land speculation from ranchers; demands for extractive reserves.	Peaceful protest through <i>empates</i> (stand-offs); alliance building.	Rubber tappers union; North American environmental groups; local Indian peasants; Brazilian workers party.	Local resource management.
Zapatista Rebellion (Mexico)	Displacement due to proposed 'bio-reserve'; forest conservation; abolition of legal rights of Indian settlers.	Violent uprising followed by extensive national and international campaign.	Local population in Chiapas and Oxaca; international action groups and networks.	Political reforms; Indian rights to resources.
Ogoni Movement (Nigeria)	Oil operations by MNCs such as Shell and Chevron, threats to livelihoods through pollution and contamination of land and water.	From peaceful demonstrations to a separatist movement.	Ogoni people's organizations and action groups; Greenpeace and other international NGOs.	Resist oil exploration; better environmental management; sharing of benefits.
Green Belt Movement (Kenya)	Desertification; local needs of women; denotification of 'green-belts'; democratization and governance.	Planting trees; protest actions and advocacy work; networking with other environmental groups in Africa.	National Council for Women; UNDP; Novib; Danish Children project.	Human rights; women's rights.
Narmada Movement (India)	Displacement; environmental impact; right to information and participation of local communities.	Peaceful protests at the local and national levels; public litigation; extensive lobbying and campaign at the international level.	Affected people; local, national and international NGOs, human rights groups, environmentalists and engineers.	Sustainable and equitable development; local resource harvesting and management.

Source: Guha (1989); Hilhorst (1997); Osaghae (1995); Hecht and Cockburn (1989); Ndegwa (1996); Castells (1997); Dwivedi (1998).

# Environmentalism of the Poor

- Environmentalism is sometimes seen as a product of prosperity – ‘environmentalism of the poor’ grows out of distribution conflicts over the use of ecological resources needed for livelihood.
- The first lesson is that the main source of environmental destruction in the world is the demand for natural resources generated by the consumption of the rich (whether they are rich nations or rich individuals and groups within nations)... the second lesson is that it is the poor who are affected the most by environmental destruction. (Indian journalist Anil Agarwal, 1986)
- The bare facts of the deterioration of India’s environment – its human consequences, the chronic shortage of natural resources are by now well established.

- Peasant women have to trudge further and further for fuelwood for their hearth and the menfolk are digging deeper and deeper for a trickle water to irrigate their fields.
- Those once subsisted on these natures are joining the band of ‘ecological refugees’, flocking to the cities in search of employment.
- The urban population itself complains of shortages of water, power, construction material and (for industrial units) of raw material.
- Conflicts set rich against poor – the case of Sardar Sarovar dam on the Narmada – the benefits from this project will flow primarily to already pampered and prosperous areas of the state of Gujarat, while the costs will be disproportionately borne by the poorer peasants and tribal communities in the upstream states of MP and Maharashtra.

- In India, for instance, the environmental movement has drawn on the struggles of marginal population – hill peasants, tribal communities, fisherman, people displaced by construction of dams – neglected by the existing political parties.
- These struggles, of peasants, tribals and so on, are in a sense deeply conservative – they are a defence of the locality and the local community against the nation.

# Gender and the environment

- When natural resources become degraded and privatized, it is to be expected that women will be in the forefront of resistance. Why should this be?

Bina Agarwal has outlined several reasons for women's participation

- First, women are concerned with the provisioning and care of the household, not because of a liking for it, but because of a constructed social role [Scarcity and pollution of water and lack of fuelwood, are women's preoccupations]
- Second, women have a small share of private property, and depend more on common property resources
- Third, women often have specific traditional knowledge (in agriculture and medicine) which becomes devalued with the growth of the generalized market system, or the intrusion of the state.

# Local Conflicts, Initiatives and Struggles

- Most of these conflicts have pitted rich against poor, for example, logging companies against hill villagers, dam builders against forest tribal communities, multinational corporations deploying trawlers against traditional fisherfolk in small boats.
- With the injustice so compounded, local communities at the receiving end of this process have no recourse except direct action, resisting both the state and outside exploiters through a variety of protest techniques.
- The struggles might perhaps be seen as the manifestation of a new kind of class conflict – where ‘traditional’ class conflicts were fought in the cultivated field or in the factory, these new struggles are waged over gifts of nature such as forests and water – gifts that are coveted by all but increasingly monopolized by a few.

# The case of Karnataka Pulpwoods Limited (KPL)

- Upsurge of environmental conflict in India; the shortages of, threats to and struggles over natural resources [the risk posed by ecological degradation]
- The state government had a holding of 51 per cent and Harihar Polyfibres held 49 per cent. KPL was charged with fast-growing species of trees for the use by Harihar Polyfibres.
- For this purpose, the state had identified 30,000 hectares of common land, spread over four districts in northern part of Karnataka [the land was nominally owned by the state following precedents set under British colonial rule] – the grass, trees and shrubs standing on it were extensively used in surrounding villages for fuel, fodder and other materials.
- From the early 1960s, the government's forest department had enthusiastically promoted the plantation of eucalyptus on state-owned land – in many parts of India, rich diverse natural forests were felled to make way for single-species plantations of this tree of Australian origin.
- This choice was clearly dictated by industry, for eucalyptus is a fast growing species sought after by both paper and rayon mills. But it is totally unsuitable for fodder (not browsed by cattle and goats, thus making regeneration easier)

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- Environmentalists deplored this preference for eucalyptus, which was known to have negative effects on soil fertility, water retention and on biological diversity generally.
- The critics of eucalyptus plantation advocated indigenous species more suited for meeting village requirements of fuel, fodder, fruit and fibre.
- The formation of KPL seemed a clearly partisan move in favour of industry, as the lands it took over constituted a vital, and often irreplaceable, source of biomass for small peasants, herdsmen and wood-working artisans.

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- In the forefront of the movement against KPL was the *Samaj Parivartan Samudaya* (Association for Social Change, SPS), a voluntary organisation working in the Dharwad district of Karnataka
- On 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1984, SPS held a large demonstration outside the production unit of Harihar Polyfibres; in December 1985, it filed public interest litigation in the High Court of Karnataka the state pollution Control Board for its failure to check the pollution of the Tungabhadra by the Birla factory.
- SPS filed public interest litigation against the Karnataka Pulpwood Limited in the Supreme Court
- The petitioners spoke on behalf of the 500,00 villagers living in the region of KPL's operations, the people most directly affected by the action of the state in handing over common land to one company.
- In the petition, the arbitrary and unilateral action of the state amounted to the passing of 'control of material resources from the hands of common people to capitalists.'

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- The arguments of equity and ecological stability aside, this petition is notable for its insistence that the lands in contention were common rather than state property, ‘vested in the village community since time immemorial’.
- Here the claims of time and tradition were counterposed to the legal status quo, through which the state claimed and enforced rights of ownership – in this respect the petition was perfectly in line with popular protests in defence of forest rights, which since colonial times have held the Forest Department to be an agent of usurpation.
- On 24 March 1987, the Supreme Court responded to the petition by issuing a stay order, thus preventing the government of Karnataka from transferring any more land to KPL.

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- Encouraged by this preliminary victory, SPS now turned into popular mobilisation in the villages. On 14 November, about 2000 people (men and women) took oath of non-violence in a school yard, and then proceed for a novel protest, termed the Kithiko-Hachiko (Pluck-and-Plant) *Satyagraha*.
- Led by drummers, waving banners and shouting slogans, the protesters moved on to the disputed area, here they first uprooted 100 saplings of eucalyptus before planting in their tree species useful locally for fruit and for fodder.
- In February 1988, an official of the Supreme Court, stated unambiguously that the raising of industrial plantations by joint-sector companies required the prior permission of the government of India. A new National Forest Policy was announced, which explicitly prohibited monocultural plantations on grounds of ecological stability.
- [The company's closure was formally announced at a board meeting on 27 September 1990]

# Lesson Learnt from the Protest

- The struggle against KPL had as its mass base – the peasants, pastoralists, and fisherfolk directly affected by environmental abuse.
- This unity, of communities at the receiving end of ecological degradation and of social activists with the experience and education to negotiate the politics of protests, has been characteristic of environmental struggles in India.
- The SPS led struggles was quite typical – for underlying the KPI controversy were a series of oppositions that frame most such conflicts in India: rich versus poor, urban versus rural, nature for profit versus nature for subsistence, the state versus the people [However, the KPL case was atypical in one telling, for the environmental movements of the poor only rarely in emphatic victory]

- These conflicts pit ‘ecosystem people’ – that is, those communities which depend very heavily on the natural resources of their own locality – against ‘omnivores’, individuals and groups with the social power to capture, transform and use natural resources from a much wider catchment area.
- The third major ecological class: that of ‘ecological refugees’, peasants-turned-slum dwellers who eke out a living in the cities on the leavings of omnivores prosperity.
- ‘Environmentalism of the poor’ might be understood as the resistance offered by ecosystem people to the process of resource capture by omnivores: as embodied in movements against large dams by tribal communities to be displaced by them, or struggles by peasants against the diversion of forest and grazing land to industry.
- Thus the Kithiko-Hachiko satyagraha was not simply an affirmation of peasants claims over disputed property as a strategy of protest, its aim was not merely to insist, ‘This land is ours, but also, and equally significantly, to ask, ‘What are trees for?’

- The **ecosystem people** includes the bulk of India's rural populations; small peasants, landless labourers, tribals, pastoralists, and artisans.
- The category of **omnivores** comprises industrialists, professionals, politicians, and government officials – all of whom are based in the town and cities – as well as a small but significant fraction of the rural elite.
- The history of development in independent India can then be interpreted as being, in essence, a process of resource capture by the omnivores at the expense of ecosystem people.

# Environmental Movement in India: Strategies

These strategies of direct action might be classified under four broad headings:

- First, there is collective show of strength, as embodied in demonstrations organized in towns and cities (mobilizing as much as people) – shouting of slogans, singing songs, dancing, winding their way to public meeting that marks the procession's culmination.
- Second, there is disruption of economic life through more militant acts of protest – hartal or bandh (shutdown strike), *rasta roko* (road blockade)

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- Third, this type of action is more sharply focused on an individual target, for instance, the dharna or sit down strike is used to stop work at a specific dam site or mine; thus the protesting peasants might *gherao* (surround) a high public official, allowing him to move only after he has heard their grievances and promised to act upon them.
- Fourth, generic strategy of direct action aims at putting moral pressure on the state as a whole, not merely on one of its functionaries – preeminent here is the *bhook hartal*. This technique was once used successfully by Sunderlal Bahuguna of the Chipko movement; in recent years by Medha Patkar on several occasions; and today by Anna Hazare or Baba Ramdev et al.

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- The *bhook hartal* is most often the preserve of a single, heroic, exemplary figure.
- A *jail bharo andolan*, literally ‘movement to fill the jails’, in which protesters peacefully and deliberately court arrest by violating the law, hoping the government would lose face by putting behind bars large numbers of its own citizens. [The law most often breached is Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code, invoked, in anticipation of social tension, to prohibit gatherings of more than five people. [Has its origin's from the colonial days – Gen, Dyer of the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre]
- India’s long struggle for freedom from British rule, by MK Gandhi – in fact Gandhi provides the environmental movement with both vocabulary of protest and an ideological critique of development in independent India.

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- A Chipko activist once told Guha: ‘After independence, we thought our forests would be used to build local industries and generate local employment, and our water resources to light our lamps and run our flour mills.’ But to his dismay, the Himalayan forests continued to service the paper and turpentine factories of the plains, and the rivers were dammed to supply drinking waters to Delhi and electricity to the national grid which feeds into industries.
- To invoke a slogan made famous by the Narmada Bachao Andolan, this has been a process of ‘destructive development’ – destructive both of rural society and of the natural fabric within which it rests.
- The environmental movement’s return to Gandhi is then also a return to his vision for free India: a vision of a ‘village-centered economic order’ that has been so completely disregarded in practice.