

Indian Environmental Conflicts

Ramchandra Guha- Ecological class: Ecosystem people, omnivores and ecological refugees.

- Development in India is a process of resource capture by omnivores at the expense of ecosystem people.
- Ecological refugees: people who migrate due to environmental changes, from rural areas to cities
- Environmentalism of the poor: J Martinez Alier, *Ecological Economics*, 1987
- ✓ resistance offered by ecosystem people to the process of resource capture by omnivores
- ✓ Perceptions and valuations of nature among subordinate social groups
- ✓ e.g. Conflicts between rural and urban populations, conflict between peasants and industry over forest produce, state takeover of natural resources or advancement of market at the expense of rural poor

- **Vocabulary of protest in Indian ecological conflicts:**

- ✓ Protestors adopt a particular strategy to defend their interests and pass judgement on prevailing social arrangement
- ✓ Protestors draw on the existing techniques of protest/ action
- ✓ Displays, performances and campaigns by ordinary people make collective claims on other

Strategies/techniques in Indian ecological movements:

1. Show of strength in towns and cities(*pradarshans*, processions), aim to assert a presence
2. Disruption of economic life (*hartal and bandh*, shut down strike; *rasta roko*, road blockade) to disrupt economic activity, bring normal life to standstill
3. Targeting concerned individual figure of authority (*dharna*, sit down strike; *gherao*, surround)
4. Shaming the state: Putting moral pressure on state as a whole than on its functionaries (*Bhook hartal*, indefinite hunger strike: led by charismatic leaders, carried out in public place, media coverage)
(*jail bharo andolan*, fill the jails: forcing state to put large number of citizens behind the bars, social tension leads to imposition and breach of sec144).

- Return to Gandhi: Vocabulary to Indian Environmental Movements and ideological critique , Mahatma Gandhi's vision of free India i.e. Village centered economic order
- Participants: students, social workers, researchers (largely biologists, social sciences), social workers, peasants, pastorals, farmers, engineers, lecturers, tribals, fisherfolks as intellectuals away from direct action

Two Types of Environmentalism

First World Environmentalism	Environmentalism of the Poor
1. United States (North)	1. India (South)
2. Post material, post industrial society, mass consumerism society Nature not restricted to privileged few but to all	2. Early stage of industrial process, environmental conflict due to lopsided development and its visible ecological degradation in independent India
3. Well organised with social movement organisations like Sierra Club and Friends of the Earth, democratic methods like court cases, lobbying with ministers, media usage	3. Traditional networks of organisations and protests (rural and tribal), increasingly turning to lobbying, litigation and other means
4. Anti class, failure of politicians to address ecological crisis, emerged outside political parties	4. Anti class, failure of politicians to address ecological crisis, emerged outside political parties

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First World Environmentalism	Environmentalism of the Poor
5. Reference point is whole world, biosphere, health of the planet, “ No humanity without nature”, deep ecology	5. Reference point is local communities, “No nature without social justice”
6. Originate outside the production process rather than a change in system of production and distribution. Change in attitudes.	6. Ecological issues linked with human rights, ethnicity and distributive justice, local communities (tribals, peasants etc, against the nation). Related to subsistence and survival, critique of development and consumerism
7. e.g. Anti pollution, wilderness crusade and lovers	7. Displaced from protected areas, dams

Question:

Based on some examples compare (similarities and differences) between the ecological conflicts in the developed and developing countries?