

Lecture 15:

Environmental Movements and Politics in India

Course: Environment and Politics in India

Environmental Movements in India

Forests: For Whom and for What?

- April 1973: Chipko movement 'Outside' commercial interests *versus* local fuel/food/fodder needs
- Protests against commercial logging (Bihar, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka)
- Environmental protests -> Demands for political autonomy, control over local resources.

Background: Forest Act. POLITICAL, SOCIAL, ECOLOGICAL watershed.

- 1980s: Protests against monocultures. 'Pluck and Plant'/*Jungle Kato* campaigns in Karnataka, Jharkhand, Uttarakhand.

Players? Farmers, reed workers, bamboo workers, rope makers, artisans, nomads, hunter-gatherers, peasants

- Protests over *Tendu* leaves (income/wages/rights)
- COORDINATED protests over the Draft Forest Bill of 1982 (NCA recommendations)
- Debates over the Forests Rights Act

Environmental Movements in India

Mulshi Satyagraha

- A strong sense of wrong and deep feeling of resentment among the peasantry whose lands are affected by the project, against the Government for sanctioning the scheme more than two years ago, without taking them in its confidence, i.e., without consent, knowledge or consultation of the peasant-owners of the land.. .
- Suspicion and distrust in both the Government and the Company, due chiefly to the procedure of acquisition, as to the bonafides of their intentions to award full compensation, or equivalent . . . land somewhere else, and other facilities already enjoyed by them or necessary for fresh colonization . . .
- Reluctance to part with the land on account of its extreme productivity, the natural facilities of irrigation and nominal amount of land revenue.
- Reluctance to part with lands, ancestral homes, and traditional places of worship and see them submerged under water.
- Natural reluctance in this class of peasantry to emigrate from one place to another . . .

Environmental Movements in India

Mulshi Satyagraha

- One and a half lakh (1,50,000) electrical horse-power would be created by the Mulshi Peta dam.
- It would save **525,000** tons of coal (and lots of money) every year. The saving of coal means a corresponding saving of Rs. **1,05,50,000** worth of fuel to the mill industry of Bombay.
- The quantity of coal saved would require 26.250 wagons for transport. These would be saved and utilized for other public purposes.
- Water once used can be directed for agricultural purposes after electrical power is created.
- Electricity thus created would give work to **300,000** labourers. If it is utilized for cotton mills, every day **51** lakh yards would be manufactured.
- The projected electrification of the Bombay suburban railway lines would give to Bombay city much faster and more frequent trains, thus enabling the development of housing schemes in purer air and healthier circumstances.

- From ***The Times of India***, 2 May 1921

Environmental Movements in India

Dams and the Damned

- Mulshi Satyagraha and contemporary parallels. Senapati Bapat *versus* Brahmin landlords of Pune/power company and the State
 - Narmada Bachao Andolan. Gujarat *versus* Madhya Pradesh
 - Tehri
 - Koel Karo
 - Silent Valley
 - Bhopalapatnam-Inchampalli
 - Different trajectory, different response: Bedthi dam in Uttar Kannada
- Economic, social, ecological, (weak) political opposition
- Politics of Pitting: Drinking water *versus* land, wick lamps *versus* lights in latrines

Environmental Movements in India

Struggles in the River/Sea

- Clashes between artisanal fisherfolk and modern trawlers
- Blue revolution
- Strikes, processions, violent clashes, calls for ban on trawlers
- Ganga Mukti Andolan: Against feudal '*panidari*' rights AND against industrial effluents

Environmental Movements in India

Mines and Misery

- Displacement, deforestation, drying up of water sources
- Limestone quarrying in the Doon Valley. NIMBY protests such as 'Save Mussoorie', 'Friends of the Doon'
- Sangharsh Samitis in Kumaon against stone quarrying
- Gandamardhan
- POSCO
- Niyamgiri
- Essar, coal mining, Priya Pillai

Environmental Movements in India

Water Pollution

- Grasim Rayons in Nagda
- Orient Paper Mills
- Pollution in the Tungabhadra
- Tanneries in Ambur
- Protest against MIDC/distilleries

Environmental Movements in India

QUESTION: What are the forms of political action by environmentalists? What has been the role of established 'political parties'?

Dharna, Pradarshan, Gherao, Rasta Roko, Jail Bhara, Bhook Hartal, Sangharsh Yatra, Jal Samadhi, Padyatra, Ecological Restoration

EXAMPLES:

First environmental *padayatra* (1982-83): Trans-Himalayan march from Kashmir to Kohima, covering 4000 km by Sunderlal Bahuguna

Save the Western Ghats March (1987-88): Along a 4000 km. long mountain chain, 600 villages, 150 organizations, several states (Kerala, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Goa, Tamil Nadu)

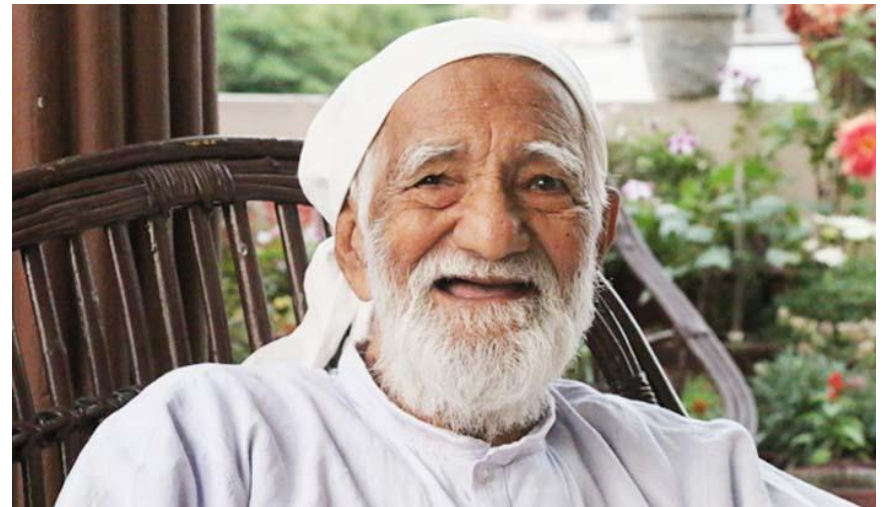
Restoration: Bali Raja memorial dam, Ralegaon Siddhi, Afforestation, check dams, energy-saving household devices etc.

THREE strands of environmentalism

Gadgil and Guha's
categorisation

CRUSADING GANDHIANS

- Reject the “modern” and “Western” way of life
- Reject materialism and consumerism
- Root for a return to the pre-capitalist AND pre-colonial village society



THREE strands of environmentalism

APPROPRIATE TECHNOLOGISTS

- Influenced by 'western socialism'
- Strive for a synthesis of agriculture and industry, big and small units, and Western and Eastern technological traditions

EXAMPLE: Dashauli Gram
Swarajya Mandal in
Uttarakhand

Reddy: Energy for a
Sustainable World



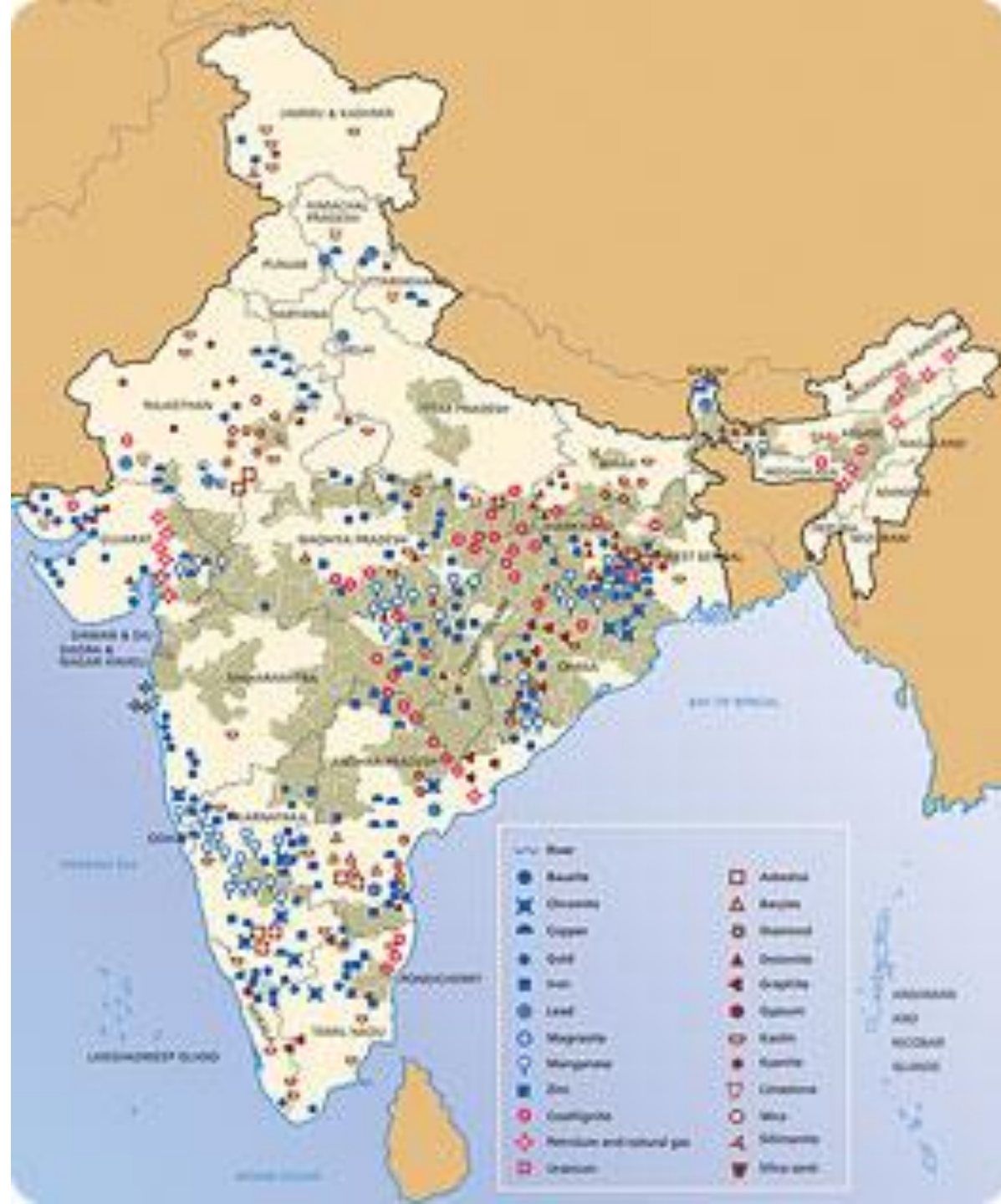
THREE strands of environmentalism

ECOLOGICAL MARXISTS

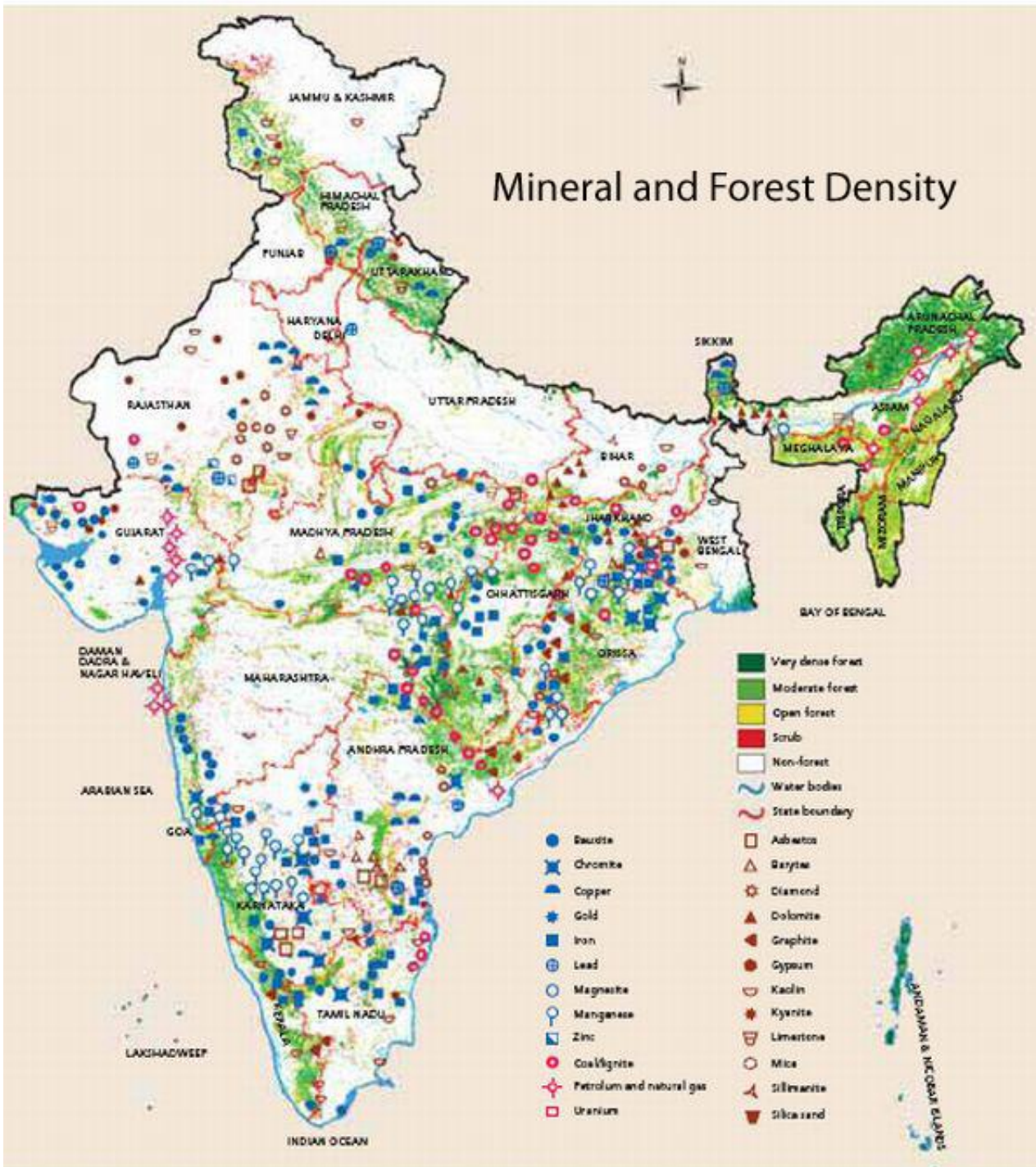
- “Polar opposites” of the Crusading Gandhians.
- Explicitly identify class as a contradiction in society.
- “Unremitting hostility to tradition”, “faith in modernity and modern science”
- Focus on industrial pollution and workplace safety.

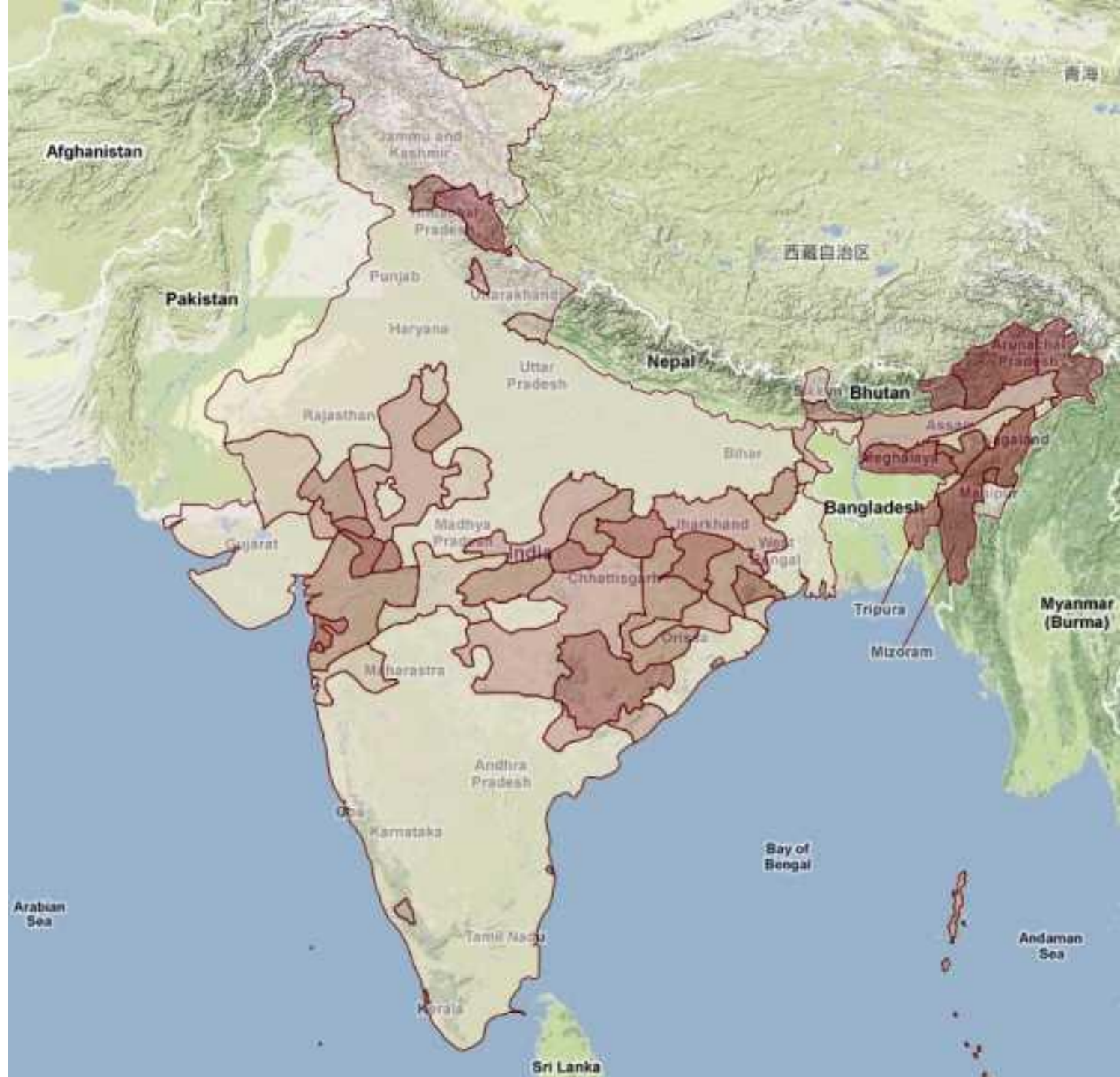
EXAMPLES: Uttarakhand Sangharsh Vahini, KSSP (Science for Social Revolution)



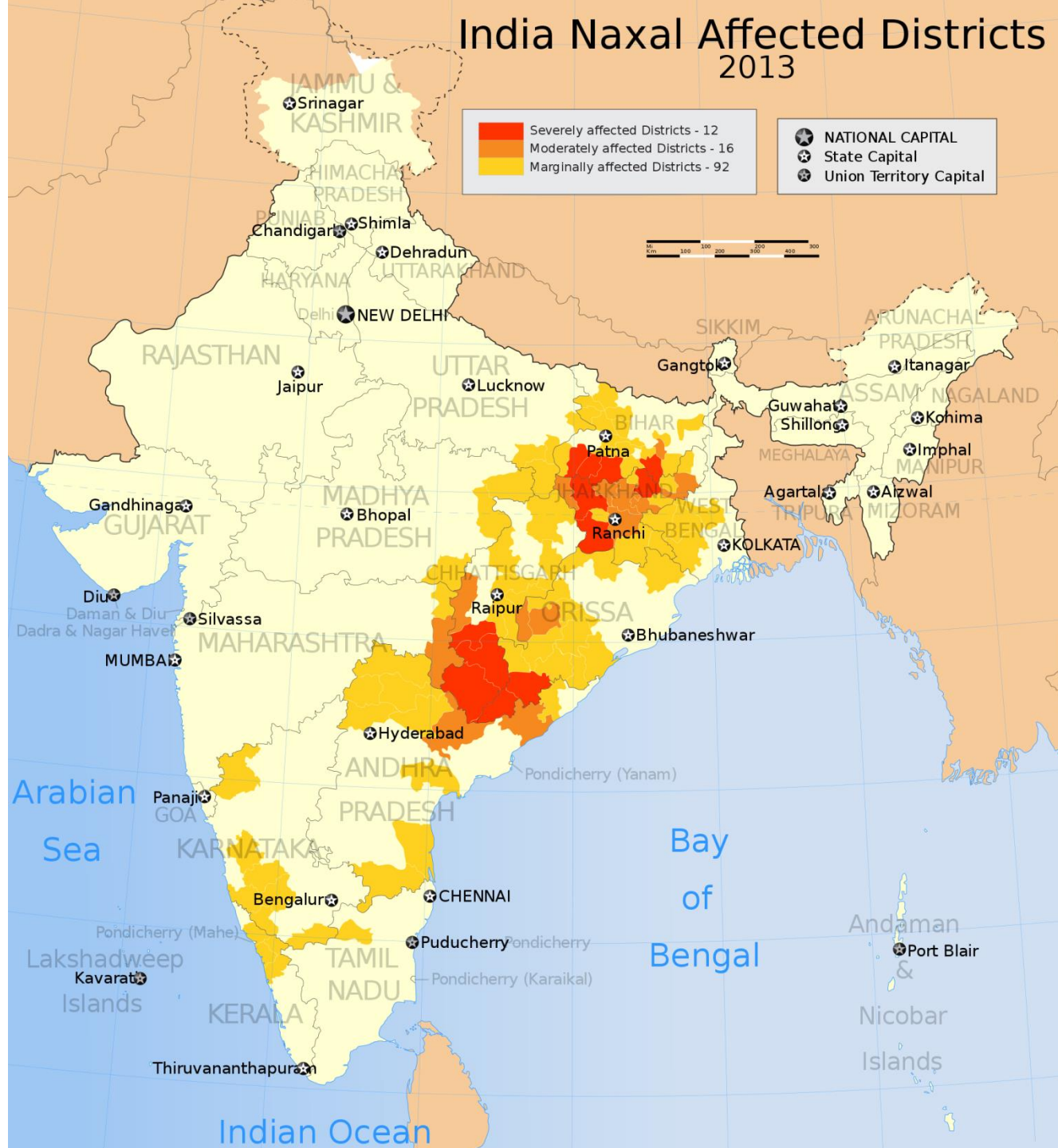


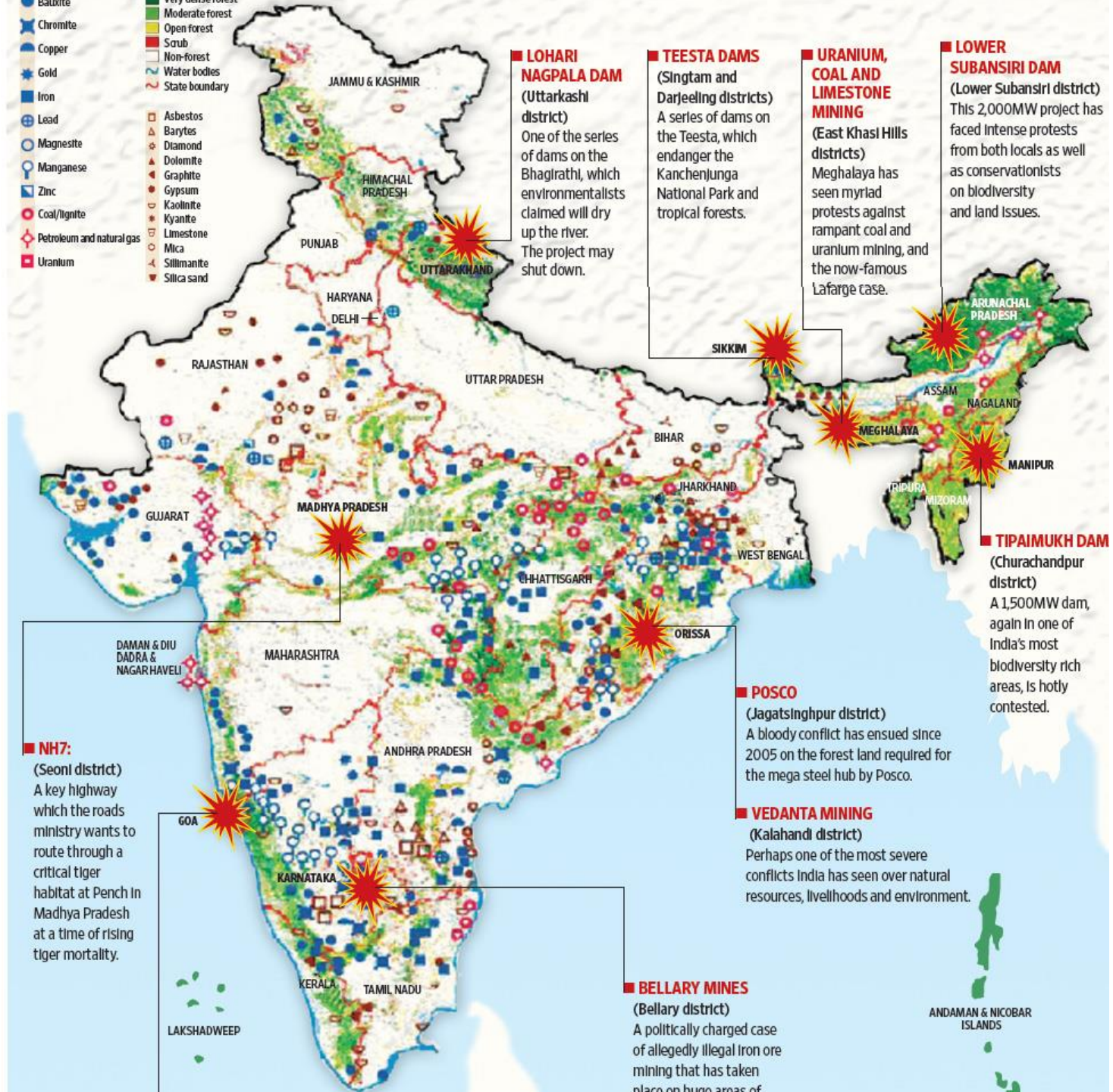
Mineral and Forest Density





India Naxal Affected Districts 2013





Jharkhand Mukti Morcha

JMM:

- *Maaro Mahajan, Maaro Daroga, Fasl Jabt, Zameen Jabt, Jungle Kato*
- Tribal alienation from land
- Control over forests/water resources
- Opposition to displacement
- Participation in decision-making
- Jobs for locals

THREE leaders, THREE mass bases,
THREE visions:

A.K. Roy, Shibu Soren, Binod Bihari
Mahato

