INDIAN GREEN THOUGHT AND ROLE OF CSO.pdf

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Green Political Thought and the Green Movement in India: Role of Women and Civil Society Organizations

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Abstract
Indian green politics and its movements have been greatly influenced by the participation of the Indian civil society organizations and of women. The role of the women and civil society organizations has been substantial and impressive in green movements in independent India. They have been well supported by the civil society organizations (CSO) which have articulated their demands in a coherent way and have succeeded in creating an impact on the Indian state and on independent agencies dealing with the environment. These have resulted in an integrated effort to realize the definite objective of preservation of the environment and the optimum use of fauna and flora for the welfare of the society and local communities. The present paper is an attempt to understand the extent of the role of women and of CSOs in the Indian green movement and in Indian green political thought. The role of civil society is quite substantial. They have become torch bearers in the green movement in India. They have a close relationship with scientific research which in turn impacts policy making by the government. The major finding of this study is that there is a dynamic interaction between the state; women as activists and civil society organizations. These interactions have enriched the green thought and also strengthened the environmental movements in independent India.
Keywords: Indian Green Political Thought, Environmental Movements, Women, Civil Society Organizations.

Introduction
Indian green politics and movement have been much influenced by the active participation of the Indian citizens and civil society organizations. Indian citizens since ages have attempted to preserve the environment with their singular as well with collective efforts. Since ages Indian people had faith in their natural world. They had even worshipped their trees and had venerated their plants. In the recent time there is mass awakening at the level of the people to think about their environment. They have come forward to save the destruction of their surroundings in effective manner.
They have been well supported by the civil society organizations (CSO) which have articulated their demands in coherent way and have succeeded these in impactful manner to the state and its agencies dealing with the environment. These twin developments are integrated effort to realize the definite objective of preservation of the environment and its effective use of fauna and flora for the welfare of the society and community. The present paper is an attempt to understand their role in the Indian green movement and Indian green political thought.

Citizens as Agent Working For Realization of a Value

The role of the women and civil society organizations has been impressive in green movements in India. They have worked for the preservation of the nature in a collective manner. These collective efforts are also a major contribution in the development of the Indian green political thinking as they have also involved the state and the government in the preservation and protection of the environment. This collectivization and involvement of the state have accrued certain benefits. Several legislations and the regulations have been passed by the government. This leads to the consideration of value and agency in the green political thinking. “Like all theories of value in general, however, that green theory of value is not self-implementing. Instead it is a theory that is addressed to moral agents, in hopes that they might themselves use it in guiding their conduct. It is through the deliberate actions and choices of those agents that the recommendations of our theory of value will be implemented, if they are to be implemented at all. Hence any theory of value or any theory of the Good needs to be conjoined with a theory of agency, analyzing the nature of the mechanisms by which its recommendations are to be given practical meaning.” The need for a theory of agency is, if anything, greater when the recommendations of the theory of value in view are not purely personal but also interpersonal and, indeed, largely political in nature. Then we will need not only a theory of agency of the ordinary sort - a theory about the nature of (individual) human action.

Indian green activists seem to have adopted the anthropocentric concepts of agency and value as enunciated by western scholars. This conceptualization has helped them to organize their struggle. Indian greens have exhibited that in a democratic system they can act in a collective group and derive certain benefits from the state. This idea was although a well thought idea but often emerged as spontaneously and a role of agent was played by the people, particularly in the rent times in the areas where trees and forests had much value for the local inhabitants. This did not take place initially in the urban plain areas due to scant forest cover, but issues of pollution, climate change became more prominent than the issues of deforestation and tree cutting in these areas. For this, as agents, they had different movements; in hills they had Chipko movement whereas in the city areas they had demand for better air quality, cleansing of the rivers and pollution related issues.

Indian Greens and Environmental Citizenship

This concept of agency and value makes Indian greens to realize that they have certain rights and obligations as well. This understanding also leads to two other major concepts, viz. environmental citizenship and limits to consumption and exploitation of the environment. A
critical analysis suggests that a concern with rights brings us to another recent development in green political theory, an attempt to articulate an environmental conception of citizenship. In relation to citizenship, rights owed by the state (and other citizens) tell only half of the story; at the same time, the citizen has a corresponding set of obligations. Contemporary green political theory in this area stresses the notion of the ecological footprint. An important environmental citizenship obligation would be to ensure that one's ecological footprint is not excessive and ideally is no bigger than that which could be enjoyed by all other human inhabitants of the planet (the Kantian sources of this view are evident here) such that we take merely our own share of ecological resources and do not invade the shares of others. This obligation would provide a strong stimulus toward "contraction and convergence," whereby citizens in the developed world reduce their ecological impact to a level that could be enjoyed by all, in equal manner.  

This concept of reduction is not only valid for the developed societies but in reality it is in practice in the Indian people since ancient time when they learnt the concept of sacrifice, limit to growth and even saved their environment, never exploiting their surrounding even if they required the exploitation of the nature, they restricted their greed and live in harmonious way with their natural world. Truth is that though the conservation movement is relatively recent, protection of wildlife and natural landscapes has been a part of the culture of Indian people. Indians have always realized the value of conservation and nature reserves have been set up since early times.  

In this background, Indian people have exhibited their ecological citizenship and “conservation ethics has been followed from the Vedic times, as evidenced from 'Isho Upanished', which says that "the whole universe together with its creatures belong to the Lord (Nature). No creature is superior to any other and human being should not have absolute power over nature. Let no one species encroach over the rights and privileges of other species. One can enjoy bounties of nature by giving up greed". Atharva Veda (12.1.11) (800 BC) hymn, "0 Earth; Pleasant be thy hills, snow-clad mountains and forests; 0 numerous coloured, firm and protected Earth; on this earth I stand, undefeated, unslain, unhurt".

**Participatory Activism and Green Thinking In Civil Society**

Indian green political thoughts and movement has been nurtured by the active role of the participatory role of the Indian citizens have always remained in existence since ancient time in the preservation and maintenance of the environment. In the recent time it has expressed itself in the new types of social movements; environmental movements are its one manifestation. In the recent times its start can be traced to efforts of Amrita Devi and her daughters when they opposed the royalty of Jodhpur king when forests were to be cut. Amrita Devi Bishnoi who had sacrificed her life along with 363 others for the protection of `khejri' tree in Khejrali village near Jodhpur in Rajasthan 273 years ago. It was the first environmental movement which was organized in India in 1730. More than a century before such a movement originated in the U.S. It was fought against indiscriminate tree felling in Jodhpur, Rajasthan. Amrita Devi, a village woman collected 362 other women from her village and marched to the forest nearby. They declared that the forest trees could be cut
down only over their dead bodies and each woman clung to a tree and stood motionless when
the contractors came. All the 362 women were axed to death by the tree fellers. This heart
rending incident compelled the then king of Jodhpur to ban tree felling in that forest6.

This effort is unparallel in the global history of green movement and perhaps it is the first
individual as well collective effort for the protection of the green life. The reflection of such
ideas was seen in the Chipko movement which did show the common people as the agents
with environmental ethical values with sole aim to preserve the value of nature. Chipko
movement had some great leaders as Sundar Lal Bahuguna and Chandi Prasad Bhatt and is
first most recognized form of the social movement with exclusive focus on the green living
and environment. The movement was almost replica of the previous movement of Amrita
Devi. The Chipko (hugging) environmental conservation movement came to public attention
in 1973 when a group of women in Mandal village, located in the mountainous Himalayan
State of Uttarkhand, "hugged" trees in order to prevent them from being felled. In the next
several years, more than a dozen confrontations between women and lumberjacks occurred in
Uttarakhand—all nonviolent and effective, enshrining forever the term tree bugger in
conservation parlance. In 1974, an especially notable confrontation occurred in Reni Village
in Uttarakhand, where a women's group, led by Mrs. Gaura Devi, blocked an army of
lumberjacks, singing: 'This forest is our mother's home; we will protect it with all our might7.

Chipko movement had certain elements of universal values. It was a movement that had
emerged, not in the past, but relatively recently. It was a story about a movement that had
emerged in a region of India that is commonly regarded as primitive and backward, and the
people involved in it seemed to be on the margins of Indian society as well. It was mobilised
by women, it was non-violent, and its participants argued against rampant economic
exploitation of nature's resources. They successfully prevented logging by engaging in the
simple act of tree-hugging when lumbermen arrived in the forests8. The role of women in the
Chipko movement has always been noteworthy. Indian green thoughts have been nurtured
with the ideas of gender equality. It is to be noticed that Amrita Devi, who initiated first
movement was a women and in the new phase of the Chipko movement in Garhwal
Himalaya, women were in forefront. The Chipko process as a resurgence of woman power
and eco-logical concern in the Garhwal Himalaya is a similar mosaic of many events and
multiple actors. The significant catalysers of the transformations which made Chipko
resistance possible have been women like Mira Behn, Sarala Behn, Bimala Behn, Hima Devi,
Gauri Devi, Gunga Devi, Bachni Devi, Itwari Devi, Chamun Devi and many others. The men
of the movement like Sunderlal Bahuguna, Chandi Prasad Bhatt, Ghanshyam Shailani and
Dhoom Singh Negi have been their students and followers. Mira Behn was one of Gandhi's
closest disciples who moved to the Himalayan region in the late ‘40s. Between Rishikesh and
Hardwar she started a cattle centre called Pashulok, because cattle are central to sustainable
agriculture9.

Chipko movement was a symbol of the Indian green thoughts exhibition in open. This
movement brought into focus two major elements of Green Political theory, viz, women were
major participants for the protection of the forests. This was an important feature of Indian
thinking on the environmental issues as women from patriarchal, village society were
organized to challenge the encroachment in their life, that too centuries before when
organized struggles were difficult to be organized due to low level of education and awareness. Second feature was that forest protection efforts were made with religious activities.

Ghanshyam Sailani emerged as Chipko poet laureate, penning verses such as the following:

*Let us protect and plant the trees*
*Go awaken the villages*
*And drive away the axe men*

When Uttarakhand women heard that the lumberjacks were on their way, they would sing such songs and walk toward the forest. The chorus would get louder and strident when the timber-cutters arrived. The women would hold hands and form a circle around the tree, hugging it as a group. The lumberjacks were rendered powerless, even with their axes and saws. The Chipko movement gathered rapid momentum as it rode the wave of spirituality. *Bhagwad kathas* (large prayer meetings) were routinely organized in forest areas, emphasizing that God resides in every living being, including in trees. To protect the trees was a sacred act, blending environmental science with deeply ingrained spirituality. Chipko's appeal was uniquely wide ranging. Thus, the movement was co-opted, shaped, and popularized by groups as diverse as local and global journalists, grassroots activists, environmentalists, Gandhians, spiritual leaders, politicians, social change practitioners, and feminists.

This element of associating the GOD with trees and nature is quite old idea in Indian thoughts. The worship of trees and herbs are observed in the country. These are treated as the abode of the God. A classical example is of Tulsi which was once planted inside the houses mainly in court yard. The practice is still prevalent in the villages and certain houses in the cities. If it is linked to modern research studies on the Tulsi, it is revealed that it is possessed with several of the minerals and can treat several serious diseases.

The institutionalization of green thought is therefore located in the social movements and in the psyche of the common people. This feature appears to be unique to India as trees have become objects of veneration and spiritual aspect is attached with these.

**Green Political Theory and Civil Society**

Civil society in the recent time has emerged as an important force in the democratic countries. These are active platform of NGOs which attempt to articulate the demands of the common people and survive between the democratic space of state and the society.

The concept of civil society was rediscovered and accorded pre-eminence in political practices in a very definite political context: in Stalinist states in Eastern and Central Europe, which had denied their citizens' basic rights, and in Latin America, where military regimes had managed to survive by employment of the same methods. In the context of autocratic states, the concept quickly acquired a subversive edge. It was in civil society that individuals and groups set out to challenge unresponsive and authoritarian states through peaceful and non-violent methods: strikes, protest marches, demonstrations, dissemination of information through informal networks, and the formation of associational life through the setting up of
reading clubs and discussion forums. The net effect of mobilisation in civil society is well known: some very powerful states collapsed, in the face of mass protests, like the proverbial house of cards\textsuperscript{11}. In this perspective civil society has come to play an important role in every sphere of human life.

It has been recognized at several level as in regional trading organization like European Union, the civil society has been recognized as an important player. Contrary to established ideas about the European Union's (EU) democratic deficit, a conception of European civil society based on contestation and communication within and across multiple public spheres is good for green politics and ecological democracy in the EU\textsuperscript{12}.

CSOs have helped to articulate the people’s demands and to place these to the state in effective manner. Their role is impactful and this is needed to rectify the environmental problems with the participation of the people with institutionalized efforts. In fact, the key objective here is to mobilise mass opinion, something which CSOs are particularly successful at doing at times of disasters, and something which has become easier with the spread of mass-communication. Braithwaite and Drahos (2000:500) found that public anxieties 'had substantial effects in globalizing new forms of regulation'. As a result these authors argue that CSOs do not necessarily need large budgets to be effective but 'they do have to be able to convince regulatory policy-makers that they might, if push comes to shove, be able to mobilize mass publics around their concerns'. Critical to the power of CSOs to affect outcomes is their ability to manage or 'frame' the issue at stake. The central role played by Greenpeace in the Brent Spar debate was largely consequent upon their success in presenting the disposal of waste as a normative issue rather than a purely scientific one. In Germany, in particular, a public increasingly committed to an ethical view of the sea as inviolate tended to view the scientific arguments about levels of toxicity as mere quibbling; for this public, the sea was to be shielded from the dumping of waste regardless of whether that waste was toxic, dangerous, or otherwise\textsuperscript{13}.

Environmental organizations (EO) are also groups with public participation and concerned with the environmental issues. They also have utility in the management of the environment. Olli et al.\textsuperscript{14} provided quantitative evidence that, in Norway, direct involvement\textsuperscript{1} with EOs was associated with pro-environmental behaviours such as the consumption of environmentally friendly products, reduction of waste, the use of green space, and avoidance of toxic products\textsuperscript{15}.

Indian green political theory has close relations with the ideas of the civil society organizations and environmental organisations. The agitations made by these organizations have been based on the green ideas as these groups advocate sustainability of the nature, its resources, closure of mining in the forest areas, protection of tribal rights, GM crops and its impact on nature, pollution and related issues and issues of deforestation, coexistence of human with nature etc. they have worked on several issues. They have published several reports, documents, research reports and have organized the lecture series. This effort extends from micro level to higher level. In the city of Kanpur a lady Mrs. Kusum Lata initiated a movement in the form of Park Bachao Andolan, to Vandna Shiva, Sunita Narayan, M C Mehta in different spheres, well organized groups. As in Khandahar, Orissa, the civil society
organisations in the region have come together. They organized themselves recently to face the challenges. Loka Shakti Abhijan (LSA) and Khandadhar Surakhya Sangram Samiti (KSSS) have taken up the responsibility to deal with the onslaught with the support of several groups and individuals. This interaction has enriched the green thoughts as it has brought into focus new elements of environment related issues in multiple ways. The civil society organizations raise the environmental issues and problems from the ground level. The micro approach coupled with people’s participation is distinctive feature of these organizations. Indian green thoughts have been benefitted much from their activism. For illustration in a meet they raised certain issues in which particular focus was on the disastrous implications of the proposed Environmental Laws Amendment Bill, 2015, which they have looked as a clear indication of the intent of the government to centralize environmental governance. They have also opposed the various mega projects that would displace millions and destabilise decades old largely progressive environmental jurisprudence in India. They have also concentrated on the issues as to save people, forests, coastal areas, various ecologically sensitive areas and also constitutional rights. They have also recognised that impacts of climate change induced extreme weather events are being maximized, causing havoc to millions, and this is a direct consequence of decades of deliberate neglect of people centred and democratic planning. The groups have also decided to "expose and fight" the manner in which the laws protecting environment, forests and forest rights were being manipulated to the advantage of "certain corporate interests. The ongoing effort of engaging certain private consulting firms to craft laws and policies is unconstitutional and forfeits the sovereign power of people and their representatives in deciding such matters. This must be exposed and stopped and the power to form policy and law must return to the people and the legislature.

These are major policy focus of the contemporary civil society organization in the country. Their demands bring out certain elements of the contemporary trends of the civil society organization; primarily they think that state is not in their favour but it is in support of the big corporate houses, thus they make green thinking as a socialist thinking. They place the green political thinking debate on the ideological platform. This ideological understanding is in fact in consonance to the global green political think which in fact lays much emphasis on the anarchism, a variant of socialism. Indian green thoughts therefore are largely following the well established ideological basis of the governance, i.e. socialism which has been recognized even at the constitutional level. This idea makes Indian greens to take burden of the millions of those who are without any power and resources except their natural ones. Tribals are therefore major focus and any harm at the level of environment as climate change, deforestation, and land rights of local and indigenous population are unacceptable to them. They not only move closer to socialist tradition but also link Indian green thoughts with the communitarian approach. As communitarians have searched to find out the existence of the individual within socially embedded roots, they have also attempted to distribute the resources on the basis of the equality. This idea of equality within a social system is specific feature of Indian thinking on the issue.

The relationship between achieving redistribution (on the basis of a principle of equality or distributive justice) and ties of community has been emphasised by communitarian
philosophers like Sandel, Walzer and Charles Taylor. Walzer, for example, does not conceive of society as an organisation for mutual benefit. He proposes the following three principles: every political community ought to meet the needs of its members as they collectively define these needs; there should be distribution according to these needs; and equality of membership for all members. Citizens need to reach an agreement about the extent of communal provision, ‘the sphere of security and welfare’. This agreement is, in fact, a kind of social contract aimed at the redistribution of:

“The resources of the members in accordance with some shared understanding of their needs, subject to ongoing political determination in detail. The contract is a moral bond. It connects the strong and the weak, the lucky and the unlucky, the rich and the poor, creating a union that transcends all differences of interests, drawing its strengths from history, culture, religion, language, and so on. Arguments about communal provision are, at the deepest level, interpretations of that union”\(^{18}\).

When the role of civil society is recognized in the green political movement. The major question remains as to how to make a coherent strong movement in a social system where the ecological degradation has come into force. The role of civil society and state is therefore require a new eyesight. Ideally, ecologically sensitive decision making would encompass a well developed public recognition of the implications and impacts of human activities over time and over large distances. Such decision making would therefore depend on active citizens and a state better organised to facilitate democratic participation. For both democracy and the environment to flourish, we now need to elaborate further upon what Held has called ‘double democratisation’-the revitalisation of civil society and the related restructuring of the state\(^{19}\).

Indian civil society has responded to this challenge. They have not only revitalized their effort but also have attempted to emerge as a centre of research publications, to act as a fountainhead of supplying the ecologically relevant material for the discourse. This is institutionalization of the civil society thoughts into a scientific form in order to influence the state to take notice of the issues. Several civil society organizations thus adopt mechanism of publishing the reports on the environment or disseminate the knowledge on the sensitive issues. In this respect the CSD, Odisha is one example which has brought into focus several relevant issues. New Delhi based CSE has emerged as a leading voice on the issues confronting the environment under the leadership of Sunita Narain, a close associate of respected environmentalist Anil Agarwal, their publication Down to Earth is noteworthy contribution in the enrichment of green political knowledge in the country.

**Conclusion**

It is now well accepted that Indian Greens with their mature thinking on environmental issues have come to play an important role at two levels; primarily they have contributed in the development of a store house of philosophical, ideological thoughts having relation with the green thinking, including issues confronting the ecological system of the country. At the second plane they have been in the forefront of the agitations for preserving their
environment. The protest aspect is well supported by the rich contribution of green thought which has taken birth at micro as well at the macro level.

There is another important inference that Indian green thoughts and politics is well nurtured by the citizens' participation in which the role of the women are quite impactful. It is an impressive revelation that Indian green thinking has been much supported by women at the philosophical and at agitation level. No other country can offer any such example in the environmental movement. Moreover the role of the civil society has a positive and significant impact. They have come to play role of torch bearers in the green movements. They have close relationship with the scientific researches which have impact on the policy making at the level of the government. The major finding is that there is interactive role of the state; people mainly women and civil society organizations. These interactions have enriched green thought, and have strengthened the environmental movements.

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